University of Alberta

A CASE STUDY OF ATTEMPTED RADICAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

By

Stephen Brown ©

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology

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ABSTRACT

This research examines how a government ministry of children's services, attempted to undertake radical organizational change in pursuit of more effective and efficient services. It pursued this agenda through the introduction of a community governance structure and New Public Management. Building on neo-institutional theory from the organizational analysis literature, as well as the literature on public sector reform and radical organizational change, I argue that the attempted radical change was differentially constrained by the political institutional context that initiated it and by the social work institutional context in which it was implemented. I further argue that the contextual constraints were exacerbated by a number of intra-organizational factors that, combined with the influence of the institutional contexts, led to the failure of the attempted change. The study considers the limitation of alternative service delivery models involving collaborative community governance structures and new public management in the context of Westminster models of government. In particular the possibility of meaningful inclusion of the community in decision-making is contrasted with the centralized, top down fiscal agenda adopted by many contemporary governments. The critical role of the senior public service is specifically reviewed. Issues of leadership capacity, accountability, and resources are considered. I argue that the use of concepts from the literature on radical organizational change informs and adds to the literature on public sector reform. That the methodology adopted for this research contributes to the radical organizational change literature.

In memory of Ronald Brown (1929-2001),

> *... a practical treatise, written with the object of bringing into full view of all concerned, the subject of plumbing as it exists today, in all its manifold aspects* (The Modern Practical Plumber, 1949)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables
List of Figures
List of Acronyms

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Statement of Research Problem 1
1.2 Central Argument 3
1.3 Research Questions 7
1.4 Study Importance 8
1.5 Research Setting 10
1.6 Chapter Outline 17

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW 19

2.1 Introduction 19
2.2 Public Sector Reform and the Case for New Public Sector Management 20
2.3 Public Sector Reform as Radical Organizational Change 31
2.4 Conclusion 46

CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL APPROACH AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 49

3.1 Introduction 49
3.2 The Research Challenges and Proposed Solutions 50
3.3 Conclusion 65

CHAPTER 4 THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION AS AN INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT FOR THE REDESIGN 66

4.1 Introduction 66
4.2 The Legal and Philosophical Underpinnings of Social Work 67
4.3 The History of Child Welfare in Alberta 73
4.4 Contemporary Social Work Research 80
4.5 A 'Social Work' Discourse 86
4.6 Conclusion 89

CHAPTER 5: THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OF THE KLEIN GOVERNMENT: A GOVERNMENT THAT MUST DO MORE WITH LESS 91

5.1 Introduction 91
5.2 Outer Context: Fiscal Crisis and a Lack of Public Confidence 92
5.3 The Government's Underlying Discourse: A Fiscally Conservative Government, A Listening Government and a Socially Conservative Government 99
5.4 Conclusion 123

CHAPTER 6: THE MINISTRY OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES: IMPROVED RESULTS AND REDUCED COSTS THROUGH RADICAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE 126

6.1 Introduction 126
6.2 Context: Fiscal Conservatism Versus Demands for More Resources 127
    6.2.1 The Office of the Children's Advocate: Impetus for Radical Organizational Change? 129
    6.2.2 The Alberta Liberal Party 142

6.2.3 The Alberta Union of Public Employees 143

6.2.4 Other Critiques 145

6.2.5 The Role of External Coalitions 148

6.3 The Vision for Children's Services: Improve Quality and Results While Reducing Overall Costs Through a "Grass Roots" Community Driven Process. 149

6.3.1 The Rhetorical Prescription for Action: A Fundamental Reform of Child and Family Services. 151

6.3.2 The Practical Framing of the Redesign Initiative 164

6.4 The Motivation, Capacity and Power to Change 184

6.5 Conclusion 190

CHAPTER 7 THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE AUTHORITIES 1999-2001 192

7.1 Introduction 192

7.2 The CFSAs' Underlying Discourse 193

7.3 The Impact of the Institutional Context of Government 203

7.4 The Motivation, Capacity and Power to Change 207

7.5 Conclusion 210

CHAPTER 8: INTERPRETING THE FAILURE TO RADICALLY CHANGE ALBERTA CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES 213

8.1 Introduction 213

8.2 Linking the Redesign to Public Sector Reform 213

8.3 The Constraining Influence of the Institutional Context 217

8.3.1 The Institutional Context of Government 218

8.3.2 The Institutional Context of Social Work 221

8.3.3 Understanding the Dynamic Interaction of the Two Institutional Contexts 223

8.3.4 Understanding the Fit Between a Model of Collaborative Community Governance and the Institutional Context of Government 227
8.4 Interpreting the Failure of the Office of the Commissioner as an Agent of Radical Organizational Change 236
8.5 Interpreting the Redesign Process as a Failure of Government 247
8.6 Conclusion 255

CHAPTER 9: RESULTS ORIENTED, COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE: COMPARATORS, CONCLUSIONS, SCHOLARLY AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS 257

9.1 Introduction 257
9.2 School Boards and Regional Health Authorities as Examples of Collaborative Partnerships 257
9.2.1 Constraining the Independence of School Boards 258
9.2.2 Regional health Authorities as Examples of Collaborative Partnerships 261
9.2.3 Comparing Child and Family Services with Health and Education 265
9.3 Implications for the Governance and Management Challenges Facing Public Sector Reform 266
9.4 Contribution of Child and Family Service Changes to Theories of Public Sector Reform and Community Governance 279
9.5 Contributions Of Child And Family Services Changes To Organizational Theories Of Change 282
9.6 Future Critical Research On Public Sector Reform and Community Governance. 284
9.7 Conclusion 288

BIBLIOGRAPHY 290
APPENDIX 1: CASE STUDY DATA BASE 304

LIST OF TABLES

Page

TABLE 6.1: The Commissioner's Mandate Statement 152

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

FIGURE 3.1 Model for Understanding Attempted Radical Organizational Change in Government 60

FIGURE 3.2 Case Study Methodology 62

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFSS	Alberta Family and Social Services
ASD	Alternative Service Delivery
CFSA	Child and Family Services Authority
CMA	Canadian Medical Association
NPM	New Public Management

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of Research Problem

This dissertation is about the failure of a provincial government Ministry to make significant improvement to its effectiveness and efficiency through radical organizational change. The literature on organizational change has long asserted that there are basically two kinds of change. Lindblom (1959, 79) differentiated between branch and root change. Branch change involves "successive limited comparisons that continually build out of the current situation, step-by-step and by small degrees," whereas root change is "a comprehensive approach starting from fundamentals anew each time." Grenier (1972, 40) makes a similar distinction, contrasting evolutionary with revolutionary change. He defines evolutionary change as "the modest adjustments necessary for maintaining growth under the same overall pattern of management," while revolutionary change consists of "serious upheavals and abandonment of past management practices involving finding a new set of organizational practices that will become the basis for managing the next period of evolutionary growth." Root or revolutionary change, also known as radical organizational change, is understood in this dissertation as far-reaching fundamental changes to the values, orientation, structure or systems of an organization (Hinings and Greenwood 1988).

The radical change undertaken by the Ministry is framed as part of a broader change agenda undertaken by the Klein government in Alberta. The government set itself a course to "think differently about how government works… to rethink not just what government does, but what government is" (Alberta, Budget 1993, 8). In turn, this change agenda is reflective of similar radical change initiatives undertaken by other governments across Canada, the U.S.A., Europe, Australia, and New Zealand over the past two decades. These initiatives are rooted in powerful social, political, and information technology forces that changed attitudes to public sector practices in profound and irreversible ways (Armstrong and Lenihan 1999). I explore these forces in detail later, but they can be summarized as two specific pressures on government for change. The first is a perceived financial problem, in the form of increasing deficits and growing debt, as governments struggled to meet growing expenditure commitments associated with their policies. This led many in government to see the need for strong, centralized, politically-led action to affect change using management strategies borrowed from the private sector (DiIulio et al. 1993, Aucoin 1995, Peters 1995). The second is a political problem revolving around the fundamental question of the legitimacy of government as a "successful" problem solving mechanism for society; and is associated with a populist demand for greater public participation in the process of government. As governments wrestled with the complex problems of a globalized economy, there was a demand for increasing input and dialogue between electorate and the elected—the meaningful involvement of citizenry in setting the policy agenda (Aucoin 1995, Nevitte 2000). Both of these forces played themselves out in the Klein government's agenda and inevitably impacted the change program initiated by the Ministry.

The Alberta Ministry responsible for child and family services both adopted techniques from the private sector and proposed using a new organizational model premised on collaborative community governance to achieve radical organizational change. In this dissertation, I examine the limitations associated with private sector management and business practices and collaborative community governance, as vehicles for radical organizational change in the context of a Westminster model of government. I specifically focus on the contextual and intra-organizational factors that supported and inhibited the change process to analyze why radical organizational change was not achieved. I examine the adequacy of using private sector management and business practices (linked to a broader initiative known as New Public Management or NPM) and collaborative community governance to meaningfully address the challenges facing government and specifically, in this case, the social problems underlying child welfare. This leads to a more fundamental question of whether radical organizational change was required and, if required, whether the foci for change were correct. In this vein I explore the need for adequate government led social policy debate and direction as a basis for real change.

1.2 Central Argument

My primary thesis is that the process and outcomes of a radical organizational change initiative, based on a "grass roots," "empowered" and "community owned" governance framework (Alberta, Office of the Commissioner of Children's Services, Focus On Children 1994), was significantly constrained by the political institutional context that initiated it and by the social work institutional context in which it was implemented. My approach builds on neo-institutional theory from the literature on organizational analysis (Powell and DiMaggio 1991, Greenwood and Hinings 1996). The theory posits that organizations find themselves entwined in a broader population or field of similar organizations, a field that forms an institutional context. The theory argues that an individual organization's behaviour is then shaped by the underlying ideas, values and beliefs associated with a particular institutional context, leading to stability of organizational arrangements rather than radical change. I argue these institutional constraints were exacerbated by a number of intra-organizational factors within the Ministry. My analysis and critique is then guided by the literatures on public sector reform of the 1980s and 1990s, and the broader contemporary literature on radical organizational change.

The public sector reform literature both acknowledges the benefits of private sector practices and increased citizen engagement, but also notes limitations and challenges. First, the context differs significantly between the public and private sectors. Those who promote the use of private sector practices are frequently criticized for ignoring the contextual institutional differences between parliament, politicians and the electorate on the one hand and boards, shareholders and consumers on the other (Savoie 1995). In particular, proposals to adopt private sector practices for public administration have floundered precisely because they have prescribed a degree of autonomy for public servants, citizens, or organizations unacceptable to the broader principle of ministerial responsibility (Aucoin 1995, Savoie 1995). In addition, the engagement of citizens and communities in new kinds of power-sharing arrangements, involving the sharing or delegating of policy-making, program design, operations and accountability, present a number of challenges. These are roles in government normally retained by cabinet, caucus, ministers, central government agencies, and line department officials. The issue of how to work out the distribution of policy making, program design, program delivery and accountability powers among ministers, central agencies, line department officials, managers, clients, and community is complex and experimental and without much in the way of consensus of how to make it fit together (Langford 1997).

The literature on public sector reform therefore raises important questions about the fit of private sector practices and community governance models with Westminster style governments. In this dissertation, I examine how the limitations of this fit constrained the attempt to make radical change to child and family services to improve both its effectiveness and efficiency. My analysis offers the possibility of a richer understanding of both the potential and limitations of private sector practices and community governance models within Westminster style governments. The tools to do this analysis are offered by the literature on radical organizational change. Central to this literature is the analysis of the interplay, over time, between the actions of organizational agents, such as managers or other coalitions of organizational agents and the constraints exerted on them by their context, particularly their institutional environment (Pettigrew 1987, Greenwood and Hinings 1996, Child 1997, Barley and Tolbert 1997). This is an approach equally supported by a stream of research from the political science literature that also identifies the important role of coalitions within a policy subsystem, such as child and family services, and their interaction with the broader policy environment (Pross 1986, Sabatier 1987, Atkinson and Coleman 1989, Lindquist 1992). I argue the institutional context of the redesign of child and family services is predominantly populated by two interlinked and overlapping institutional contexts: government and the social work profession. In building my argument, I use analytical tools from the organizational change literature to understand better how, over time, the institutional contexts of government and social work act to significantly constrain the use of private sector practices or the engagement of citizens in a meaningful, collaborative partnership to redesign and manage children's services. I explore the degree to which both the institutional and more immediate organizational context control and shape the potential discourses in the organization, and in turn, the behaviours of organizational members.

In this dissertation I also analyze the impact of the internal dynamics of the Ministry on its ability to realize radical organizational change. I argue that the contextual constraints were exacerbated by a number of intra-organizational factors. Greenwood and Hinings (1996), Hinings and Greenwood (1988) explain the response of the individual organization to pressure from its institutional context as partly a function of the organization's internal dynamics. They focus specifically on the role of interests and values, power dependencies, and capacity for action as facilitating or inhibiting successful change.

An analysis of the external and internal organizational factors allows both an assessment and explanation of the change process. Based on this analysis, I discuss the adequacy of using business sector management techniques and community governance models as a means for affecting improvement. I argue that in and of themselves, they are inadequate to address the problems facing both child and family services in particular and government in general. While both are valuable, they need to be used within clearly articulated social policy and institutional frameworks that support their use. I argue the need for both adequate social policy debate and structural redesign of government as a basis to implement radical change. In effect, I argue that the solution of radical change was proposed before the problem was adequately defined through a political process or the supporting infrastructure developed. I propose that prior to the organizational change initiative, there was a need for government-led public debate and clarity about the role of government, what social policy objectives should be pursued, and how government would subsequently need to operate.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guide my analysis:

1. What is the impact of the institutional context of government in facilitating or inhibiting the use of collaborative community governance models?

2. What are the possibilities of organizational actors achieving radical organizational change within the institutional context of government?
3. What role can private sector practices, and more broadly New Public Management (NPM), play as tools for achieving radical organizational change to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of government?

1.4 Study's Importance

Radical public sector reform has a profound and direct impact on the lives of citizens. It changes the governance context in which economic and social policies are developed. It is also expensive to undertake, using limited tax dollars to change the organizational architecture, rather than delivering services. It warrants public attention, debate and accountability. This study contributes to that scrutiny, debate and accountability.

Community governance is a fundamental element of any society. It describes how collectives of people structure themselves to make choices about how they live together, what ideas will dominate, what policies will be adopted, and how resources are distributed. Representative democratic government is a form of community governance, yet in the past decade the idea of community governance has been used to signal something other than large central representative governments: It has become a critique of central representative government. It has been posited as a remedy to redress the perceived failure of central governments to solve key economic and social problems, by returning responsibility back to local community structures. There has been a growing demand for experimentation with greater public participation in the decision making processes of government—a devolving of policy and program decision-making to more local forms of governance structures.

However, such demands do not necessarily imply agreement about the ends to be achieved. The idea of community governance has been an attractive strategy to many on both the left and right of the political spectrum (Wharf and McKenzie 1998). The concept contains a basic contradiction:

> For neo-conservatives, community governance means reducing the size and significance of governments by returning the responsibility for helping individuals and families to churches and neighbourhood and charitable organizations. For those who believe in democratic socialism, community governance does not represent an abandonment of state responsibility for the human services, but rather affords the potential of involving more citizens in governance issues. It is a policy direction that replaces the rigidity and cumbersome nature of large bureaucracies with small, user-friendly agencies (Wharf and McKenzie 1998, 116).

As argued by McKenzie (1994) and Wharf and McKenzie (1998), both the neo-conservative and social democratic agendas for community governance are simultaneously being played out in a number of political contexts and social policy arenas. The Alberta of the 1990s is an ideal site to study this dynamic. Within the redesign of children's services, there is an inherent tension between the neo-conservative and social democratic agendas. The government's neo-conservative, top down, fiscally-driven and conservative social policy agenda sits side-by-side with a community governance framework endorsed by the government, that argues the need for more money and a more active approach to social policy.

The outcomes of the experiments in using local community governance structures will have important consequences for the evolving shape of our societal governance structures and the role of government in the lives of citizens. Given the relative newness of these experiments through the late 1980s and early 1990s the study of their outcomes is still in the early stages and warrants careful examination.

A better understanding of these social experiments, involving private sector practices and increasing citizen participation, will shed greater light on the evolving shape of our societal governance structures, of the complex process of governing, power sharing, and participatory policy development. The goal of this research is to increase understanding of the process and outcomes of the two agendas as they played themselves out in the redesign process for child and family services and to consider the broader governance and policy implications that might be garnered.

1.5 Research Setting

The research setting for this dissertation is the Ministry of what was Alberta Family and Social Services at the beginning of the redesign process in 1993 and is now the Ministry of Children's Services in 2002.

Organizational Structure and Size of Alberta Family and Social Services

The Ministry's structure at the start of the redesign was centred on a corporate headquarters linked to a regional service operations structure.

The corporate headquarter was headed by a Deputy Minister supported by four Assistant Deputy Ministers. The Assistant Deputy Minister for Resource Management Services covered Information Resource Services, Financial Services and Administrative Services. The Assistant Deputy Minister for Personnel Services was responsible for Staffing and Classification, Employee Resources, Staff Development and Personnel Planning. The Assistant Deputy Minister for Program Policy and Development was responsible for six branches: Income Support Services, Child Welfare Services, Family Support Services (including Day Care and Prevention of Family Violence), Services to Persons with Disabilities, Legislative Planning, and Federal and Provincial Arrangements. The Assistant Deputy Minister for Regional Operations was responsible for field services through a regionalized model headed by six Regional Directors who formed part of the Ministry's senior leadership team.

As described in the 1990-91 Alberta Family and Social Services Annual Report, the Ministry prior to the redesign initiative provided two distinct categories of service: financial and social supports. *Financial Supports Services* included "Support for Independence" (also known as "social allowance" or more commonly as "welfare"), the Alberta Assured Income Plan, the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped, Day Care Subsidy and Widow's Pension. *Social Support Services* for children, adults and families included Child Welfare Services and the Office of the Children's Advocate to serve the protective needs of children; Day Care Regulations, Family Relations, Family and Community Social Services, the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence, Women's Emergency Shelters, Services to Persons with Disabilities; and Services to Seniors, as well as the Appeal and Advisory Secretariat to provide a system for citizen appeal.

My focus in this dissertation is that group of services that would become part of the Children's Ministry established in 1998: Child Welfare Services; the Office of the Children's Advocate; Family and Community Social Services, Day Care; the Prevention of Family Violence; and Services to Children with Disabilities.

At the beginning of the redesign process the part of the ministry responsible for child and family services had a staff compliment of 1540: Child Welfare 1331, Services to Children with Disabilities 80, Day Care Policy and Regulations 123, Prevention of Family Violence 6 (Alberta, News Release November 30, 1994). Child Welfare was comprised of a significant number of staff directly involved in service delivery. Some 800 case-workers and supervisors were employed by the Department across 48 regional offices in 1992 (Alberta, In Need of Protection 1993:298).

Child Welfare

By far the largest, most expensive (as a percentage of total expenditures) and most dominant of these service areas is child welfare, with its legislated focus on the protection of children from abuse and neglect. In Alberta, prior to the redesign, the most recent version of the Child Welfare Act was proclaimed July 1, 1985. Under the legislation, delegated provincial child welfare workers have the authority to offer support to families where there are child protection concerns; to apprehend children and place them in substitute care when it is deemed necessary in the best interest of the child; and to facilitate adoptions for those children in permanent care or given up for adoption by their parents. If children are apprehended by a social worker, they are normally placed in one of three categories of substitute care: foster homes, group care, or institutional care (Wharf 1993).

The majority of children in substitute care are placed in *foster care*. However, child welfare agencies have had a longstanding difficulty in recruiting adequate numbers of foster care placements in general and for adolescents in particular. This situation has been exacerbated in recent years. In part, this is due to the increasingly difficult behavioural and emotional problems of the children who do come into care. It also is attributed to the increasing number of dual income families, making poorly compensated foster care an unattractive or unviable option for interested families. *Group care*, which is licensed by the province for five to ten children, is more structured than foster care and uses hired, qualified staff on a rotating shift basis. However, difficult working conditions and low pay lead to high turnover. *Institutional care* is used least often and only in the most severe circumstances. It is characterized by campus-based settings where care is provided for large groups of children focusing on "treatment" services aimed at ameliorating more severe behavioural problems.

Each of the substitute-care options present advantages and disadvantages. In general terms there is a preference for foster family placements as most akin to a "normal" family environment and is the least expensive of the three options.

In the past fifty years, the overall number of children in substitute care has dropped as a percentage of the total population of children, due to greater efforts being made to support their continued placement in families (Thompson 1989, Wharf 1993, Kinjerski and Herbert 2000). A key exception to this trend has been the number of Aboriginal children in substitute care. As a percentage of the total population of Aboriginal children, the number in substitute care remains very high. The overrepresentation of Aboriginal children has been an issue of growing concern over the past three decades. This pattern continues to be a serious concern to First Nations, Métis peoples, Inuit peoples and child welfare agencies across Canada.

Since the early 1990s, the Office of the Children's Advocate has played an independent role in monitoring the child welfare system. The office is headed by the Children's Advocate, supported by a Manager for Program Policy Services and a Manager for Program Resources and a small central staff. The Office of the Advocate has regional offices for the northern and southern Alberta under the leadership of two directors and supported by eight Child Advocates (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report *1992-93)*. The Office of the Advocate is mandated through the Child Welfare Act both to advocate on behalf of individual children receiving services under the Act, and also to offer criticism of its systemic performance (Alberta, Child Welfare

Act 1985). In line with other critics, the Office of the Advocate has repeatedly characterized the child welfare system as under-funded, its staff inadequately trained and its outcomes poor.

Family Violence and Abuse

As with child abuse, the incidence of family violence and abuse reported to authorities has grown dramatically throughout North America over the past few decades (Baker 1995). Also, as with reports of child abuse, the growth in part relates to changing social values, moving the issue from the private to the public domain with supportive legislation. Current programs provide crisis intervention, primarily for women, through the use of shelters, increased use of legal action against the abuser, access to transitional housing and, where necessary, the acquisition of social assistance benefits to cover living costs. The adequacy of funding for services has been a longstanding issue in this sector. Advocates contest the adequacy of services in terms of the number of shelter places available, geographical accessibility (particularly in northern and rural areas of the province), and levels of support available to victims of family violence. While all shelters in Alberta receive core funding from government, all shelters fund-raise to cover their total expenditures.

Child Care

Child Care in the province is privately operated, but essentially under provincial regulations. Government subsidies are available to low-income families and single parents to access regulated and licensed premises. Across the sector, pay is poor and the number of qualified staff limited.

Services to Children with Disabilities

Services to children with disabilities were established in 1974. Through this program a Director of Child Welfare can enter into agreements with parents of mentally, physically or emotionally disabled children to provide a variety of services suited to the needs of the child and family, including counselling, support services or financial help to cover the extra costs imposed by a child's disability. These services have gradually increased in size and scope over the past twenty-five years (Alberta, Family and Social Services Annual Report 1990/1991).

Family and Community Support Services

Finally, Family and Community Support Services is "responsible for helping communities to promote the social, physical and mental well being of Albertans" through developing partnerships between "the provincial and municipal governments, or other local authorities, to help create conditions in Alberta's communities that will strengthen and improve family and community life" (Alberta, Family and Social Services Annual Report 1990/91, 9). Funding is provided on a cost-shared basis, with the province contributing up to 80% and the municipalities 20%. The focus remains on local programming, with each community responsible for setting its own priorities and developing services based on local needs. Community programs include after school care, meals on wheels, youth outreach, centres for seniors, family life education, home support, volunteer development, and information and referral services.

1.6 Chapter Outline

The following chapters develop the arguments presented above in sequence. Chapter 2 presents key ideas from the public sector reform and radical organizational change literature relevant to this study. In chapter 3, using this literature, I set out the theoretical framework developed to analyze the organizational change process. I provide information about the methodology and data used for this dissertation. In chapter 4, I explore the underlying discourse brought to the redesign by the social work profession's institutional context. This includes an overview of the scope, history, philosophy and issues facing child and family services. Chapter 5 focuses on the institutional context of the Klein government in terms of its underlying discourse. In chapter 6, I explore the more immediate context of the Ministry in which the redesign was situated. In examining the Ministry context, I analyze both the intra-organizational issues facing the Ministry and also the development of the Office of the Commissioner of Children's Services as an agent to facilitate radical organizational change. In chapter 7, I look at the endpoint of the redesign with the implementation of a new local authority governance structure within a new Ministry. Chapter 8 synthesizes and interprets the redesign using the concepts from the theoretical framework developed earlier. In this chapter I take a macro perspective, analyzing how key dynamics across government, Ministry and local authorities interacted to inhibit the attempted change process. I examine the role of both the Office of the

Commissioner, the Ministry and broader governments as change agents. In chapter 9, I present my conclusions, relate my analysis to the broader context of community governance in the fields of education and health care, outline the scholarly and practical contributions made by this dissertation, and, building from the strengths and weaknesses of the study, suggest the possibility of future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I set out how the public sector reform literature of the past two decades provides both an understanding of the impetus for the radical organizational change undertaken by many western governments and a link to the broader theoretical questions surrounding the impacts of public sector reform on contemporary society. I will use this literature to interpret the restructuring of public services undertaken by the Klein government from1993-2000, within the broader context of reform initiatives undertaken by governments across Canada, the U.S.A., the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand. Many of the key elements found in recent public sector reform are exemplified by the Klein government's restructuring: tendencies to centralization through fiscal policies and the introduction of private sector concepts and business practices into public sector management; and tendencies to decentralization through increased citizen involvement. In this chapter, I show how the public sector reform literature provides both a broad contextual understanding for these tendencies and a means to explore difficulties in using private sector practices and increased citizen involvement in the context of a Westminster model of government.

While this literature adequately identifies the tendencies and issues in public sector reform, it does not focus on the underlying dynamics associated with organizational reform. Therefore, I also review concepts from the research literature on radical organizational change as a basis to later analyze the underlying organizational dynamics that act to facilitate or constrain such public sector reform.

The use of both literatures provides a holistic understanding of the possibilities, limitations and likely outcomes of current public sector reform based on the use of private sector practices and increased citizen engagement. Both these literatures situate the redesign of child and family services within a broader set of theoretical questions related to the challenges of public sector reform.

2.2 Public Sector Reform And The Case For New Public Sector Management

Between the mid-1960s and the mid-1990s, a revolution took place in thinking about the structure and role of the public sector (Rockman 1998). Many services that once formed part of government were moved outside. Other operations were retained, but delivered very differently, often with less staff and the aid of new technology. The 1998 Canadian Survey of Workplace Issues in Government, combining the federal and several provincial governments, points to some of the key elements of these changes (Verma and Lonti 2001, iii). Managers reported significant restructuring through downsizing and the scaling back of operations, an increase in work volume relative to the size of the work force, and the divestiture of many service delivery functions. Such restructuring is not new (March and Olson 1983); however, with this recent spurt of changes, some researchers see a more sustained impetus for radical change (Trebilcock 1994, Aucoin 1995, Caiden 1998).

These changes may be seen as a response to the challenges posed by external forces. First and foremost, poor national economic performance required restraints in public sector spending due to ongoing deficits and growing debts (Guttmann 1994). This was framed by a perception that within the new international economic order there were global constraints on what a government could or could not do within its domestic borders (Marchak 1991, Martin 1993). Second, there was a widespread decline in public confidence in both the effectiveness of public policies and the quality of public services with resulting calls for improvements (DiIulio et al. 1993). As a result, governments found themselves with a political platform promising the delivery of more with less (Verma and Lonti 2001).

New Public Management

The perceived pressures led many governments to pursue strong, centralized fiscal management strategies, combined with the advancement of private sector management strategies and practices to reduce expenditures and achieve operational efficiencies. The contours of the resulting change are derived from, but not limited to, a collection of ideas that became known as New Public Management (NPM).

The main thrust of NPM is that without adding cost, more and better quality services can be provided through the pursuit of greater efficiency. This idea had been tried out in the private sector (especially in manufacturing) in the 1980s and the 1990s. The motivation provided by increased foreign competition, combined with the increased flexibility created by new technologies and deregulation, pushed the search for a more efficient operational paradigm. A plethora of ideas, initiatives and techniques related to leadership, managing people, production technology, measuring results and controlling costs emerged throughout this period. As reported in a special edition retrospective by the Harvard Business Review (September 1997), corporate downsizing, re-engineering, outsourcing, partnering, lean manufacturing, quality management, improved information systems, activity-based costing, electronic services, renewed client focus, improved business planning and new accounting practices are representative of the techniques adopted. Businesses also turned their attention to leveraging a competitive advantage based on reduced corporate taxes. This was underscored by a sustained and vigorous promotion of a "free" market ideology that espoused smaller government. The freeing of market forces from state restraint was framed as good for business and the whole community (Marchak 1991, Korten 1995).

Governments across North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe adopted the logic of needing to reduce spending to address deficits and debt, to reduce corporate taxes to facilitate a competitive private sector that would create more jobs, and to reduce personal taxes to increase consumer demand. A decrease in government revenues and expenditures was to be offset by improved efficiency through the adoption of private sector practices, ensuring the ability of the government to do more with less.

Citizen Engagement

While the logic of adopting private sector practices may have appealed to many governments, there was ambivalence from many citizens. Armstrong and Lenihan (1999, 16) note that Ekos Research concluded in 1996 that fewer than one in five Canadians believed that the federal government places public interest ahead of big business, the interests of politicians, and the interests of politicians' friends when making decisions. Provincial governments fared no better. Overall, Ekos found that three-quarters of the country's citizens believe that governments had lost sight of the needs of Canadians (Delacourt and Lenihan 1999). Armstrong and Lenihan (1999, 16) also note that research undertaken by the Federal Deputy Minister's Task Force on Service Delivery Models in 1996 found citizens critical of government's dealing with complex, interrelated issues in a fragmentary rather than a cooperative and integrated way. Citizens questioned the inadequate involvement of governments in areas of social and economic life, and also demanded greater transparency, accountability, and ample opportunity for increased citizen engagement. In short, there was a demand to see governments working together with their citizens through greater citizen inclusion in policy development and program design and delivery.

This shift in the dynamics of citizen-state relations has taken place across the advanced industrial world over the past two decades and has been shaped by value changes among publics (Nevitte 2000). Starting the in mid-1970s, a variety of observers began to notice stresses in the political systems of many advanced industrial states. While diagnoses of the problem varied, there was some agreement about the symptoms. First, citizens' attachments to political parties had become progressively weaker. Second, there had been a decline in the proportions of party memberships among these publics. Third, there had been rising levels of voter volatility, linked to a state of flux in the long-standing party system and new parties with non-traditional agendas that offered alternatives to challenge old parties. Indeed, publics were increasingly turning to alternative forms of political action such as signing petitions, attending lawful demonstrations, engaging in boycotts, and greater participation in new social movements. This dynamic was enhanced by an increasingly better educated citizenry.

Nadau (1999) reported that just one in ten Canadians said they were "very satisfied" and one in three expressed "little satisfaction" with the way democracy works in the country. A very substantial proportion of Canadians—some 53 percent—indicated that they felt they had very little say in what government does. Kanji (1999) notes that, in general, Canadian Election Study data gathered since 1965 shows that Canadians' confidence in their political institutions is low, their trust in elected officials is low and declining, and there is a downward trend in external efficacy, understood as how responsive citizens believe the political system is to their demands. Kanji (1999) points out that Canadians are increasingly likely to believe both that the "government doesn't care much about what people like me think," and that "elected officials soon lose touch with the people."

In summary, people's sense of their own subjective political competence has been sustained or increased, while their evaluations of the responsiveness of their own political system have been declining. One important caveat is to note that the Canadian evidence concerning citizens' orientations to the state is broadly consistent with, and similar to, evidence coming from citizens in other states, including states that do not operate under Westminster-style rules (Nevitte 2000, 90). As such, institutional reform of the Westminster model needs to be carefully considered. Nevertheless, a very real challenge remains for institutional political parties in how to harness, or respond to, the rising participatory instincts of citizens.

Reconciling Centralizing Tendencies with Citizen Engagement

In practice, the centralizing fiscal and managerialist tendencies require some form of political accommodation with citizen demands for greater participation in the process of government (DiIulio et al. 1993, Aucoin 1995, Peters 1995). The result has been an awkward attempt simultaneously to reconcile centralizing and decentralizing tendencies within the same political agenda. The agenda was framed as getting government right (Ford and Zussman 1997). Governments attempted to pursue a concern for economy and efficiency through a finance-driven perspective on public management reform, while simultaneously trying to meet demands by populist coalitions on the right and left of the political spectrum for direct democracy measures. The attempted reconciliation has seen the increasing use of alternative forms of service delivery (ASDs) that have very much emphasized the application of business practices, but frequently combined these with increased citizen participation (Ford and Zussman 1997, Hikel 1997). There have been two principle approaches to implementing ASD projects: The first focuses on changing critical aspects of service delivery processes within an existing organization structure. A second approach focuses on fundamentally restructuring existing agencies or creating new ones.

The broad set of ideas associated with NPM and demands for increased citizen participation found its popular expression in Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) book *Reinventing Government*, a book that DiIulio et al. (1993) wryly note may have been the first public administration book in history to become a best seller. Osborne and Gaebler's ideas both reflected and were subsequently referenced by many governments undertaking reform, and as such are worth further elaboration in the present context. They argued that the current form of governance, established in the industrial era, had evolved into a sluggish, centralized bureaucracy preoccupied with rules and regulations and managed by hierarchical chains of command. They acknowledged that bureaucratic institutions may still work well in circumstances where the environment is stable, the task simple, where every customer wants the same service, and the quality of performance is not critical. However, they argued that these circumstances were not present in the major areas of health, education, and social services. Their remedy was for governance in these major areas to become more flexible, more innovative, and more entrepreneurial.

Osborne and Gaebler argued that governments should play a more catalytic role by establishing policy priorities as distinct from the role of delivering goods and services which should be handed over to the private sector. This places government in a 'steering' role as distinct from a 'rowing' role. A number of other complementary changes were also proposed: Community-owned government, involving substantial devolution or decentralization of government functions to 'empowered' community organizations that more fully engage citizens should be used. Government should become more competitive through injecting competition into service delivery, using market forces to leverage change. Government should become mission-driven and results oriented, transforming itself from a rules-driven organization by funding outcomes rather than inputs. Government should become customer driven by being responsive to meeting the needs of the customer, rather than the bureaucracy. Government should also be more entrepreneurial by maximizing its possibilities for raising non-tax revenues rather than simply spending tax revenues. Finally, government should become more focused on preventing problems, rather than curing them. In effect, the book gave governments what they wanted to hear, the promise of being able simultaneously to reduce expenditures, improve services, and increase the participation of citizens in the governance process. The academic community gave the book a decidedly critical reception, arguing that while it contained plenty of catchy phrases and slogans, the solutions being proposed were based on little evidence and a superficial understanding of how governments, particularly large central governments, work (DiIulio et al.1993, Peters and Savoie 1994).

Wilson (1989) argued that large government bureaucracy is not the simple, uniform phenomenon it is sometimes made out to be, but rather is complex and varied. He advised that to discuss government meaningfully requires adhering as closely as possible to what actually happens in real bureaucracies. From this perspective, Osborne and Gaebler's work can be criticized for downplaying the critical and complex roles of parliament, politicians and the electorate (Savoie 1995). These roles involve reconciling strong differences of interests by developing coalitions across interests and powerful constituencies as much as, or possibly more so, than they do using the rational problem-solving processes suggested by private sector management practices. In practice, the demands facing government agencies are the competing and sometimes contradictory public demands for services, the resolution of which is a political solution involving compromise and not simply a rational pursuit of private business efficiency and effectiveness. The goal of many government departments is, therefore, never just business efficiency in pursuit of a bottom line, but rather meeting a whole range of often competing and contradictory political demands (Wilson 1989).

Applying private sector business practices and increased citizen engagement to government therefore has been problematic. To better analyze this, Pollitt (1998) argues that new public management (also sometimes described as "managerialism"), must be understood as *ideology*, as *rhetoric*, and as a set of *practices*. As an *ideology*, it assumes that better management, rather than better policies, new technologies, or different kinds of constitutional arrangements, offers governments the best way forward in addressing their current challenges and as a means to improving overall governance. As *rhetoric*, it articulates as given a number of assumptions: (1) public bureaucracies are somehow inadequate to contemporary circumstances and therefore in need of restructuring; (2) there is a body of proven ideas and management approaches that can be relied upon to bring about desired change in the direction of simultaneous improvement in efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and quality with no hint of the struggle with rising demands and diminishing real resources that many governments actually face; (3) the desirability of efficiency is self-evident without ever asking to what ends such efficiency is being pursued; and (4) that there is a need for improved quality and consumer choice, but with quality framed as procedural quality (speed of processing) versus substantive quality improvements in addressing issues of inequality and poverty, which are portrayed as beyond the scope and control of government and subject to global market forces. Finally, Pollit notes that as a set of *practices* it is important to understand that NPM is not a single entity or set of techniques, but a broad and varied application and adaptation of a range of management and business practices. Pollit's characterization of NPM provides a useful analytic framework through which to explore recent public sector reform.

If NPM can be framed as multifaceted and problematic, so also can increased citizen participation in governance. For Langford (1997), the key to understanding its possible limitations within the context of government is to understand the role of accountability in contemporary, democratic representative governments. The Westminster model posits the linear accountability of the whole chain of command upward through the minister to cabinet (Aucoin 1995, Langford 1997, Paquet 1997). This model of government can be said to fit with a managerialist approach insofar as it also assumes a hierarchical top-down philosophy. However, Langford (1997) notes more difficult and interesting trade-offs are confronted by attempts to be more inclusive of citizen involvement. In this case, the issue of how to work out the distribution of policy making, program design, and program delivery with accountability powers among cabinet, ministers, caucus, central government agencies, line department officials, managers, clients and citizens is a complex one.

Together, the outcome of applying NPM practices in pursuit of expenditure reductions while improving services, combined with facilitating increased citizen participation is complex and awkward. The outcome is that governments are experimenting with changes across different organizational levels, forms and elements without having much in the way of consensus of how they will fit together.

The analysis offered by the public sector reform literature points to the impetus and some of the difficulties or contradictions in utilizing NPM practices and increased citizen engagement within the context of a Westminster style government. It provides an understanding of key structural elements and how they appear to fit or not to fit together. However, it is somewhat static in its analysis. It alludes to the underlying dynamics, but does not adequately articulate how attempted public sector reform evolves over time. To develop a more probing and dynamic analysis of how the contextual and intra-organizational elements interact to constrain or facilitate public sector reform, I have turned to the literature on radical organizational change.

2.3 Public Sector Reform As Radical Organizational Change

The analysis offered by the literature on radical organizational change raises both theoretical and practical questions about the environmental and intra-organizational dynamics associated with organizational change. The literature asserts that there are basically two kinds of change: evolutionary / incremental change or revolutionary / radical change. The public sector reform undertaken by many governments is presented as an attempt to realize radical organizational change. The focus on radical organizational change began in earnest in the 1980s. A number of researchers in the field of organizational change began exploring the possibilities and intricacies of fundamental changes to the values, strategic orientation and / or several core structures and systems within an organization (Tichy 1983, Kimberly and Quinn 1984, Miller and Friessen 1984, Pettigrew 1985, Child and Smith 1987, Hinings and Greenwood 1988). This has been the reform goal of many governments: to transform or radically change government operations through the reinvention, the transformation, the total re-engineering of the values, strategic orientation, core systems, structures and work processes of government.

Agency or Structure As Determinants of Change

A key issue is the ability of politicians or interested citizens, either individually and / or as groups, to achieve or to oppose such reform. In the organizational change literature, this issue is framed as the "agency-structure" debate (Reed 1997). This literature has focused on the ability of organizational actors to achieve organizational change relative to the role that context (in the form of structural conditions) plays in shaping, facilitating, blocking, limiting or regulating such change.

This research agenda built on an earlier exploration of Weber's ideas about the 'bureaucratic organization' in the 1950s (Gouldner 1954, Blau 1955, 1956, Etzioni 1961). An 'organic' understanding of organizations developed, building on ideas first developed in the discipline of biology (von Bertalanfy 1968). It conceptualized an organization as composed of a number of system components that exist together in a state of dynamic interdependency, adapting to and contingent upon an ever-changing environment (Clegg 1990). This change in understanding brought about the demise of what had been termed as a Weberian bureaucratic interpretation of structure and replaced it with contingency theory. By the early 1970s, there had been several major research programs that had investigated components of organizational structure and their contingent relationships with situational variables or context (Hall 1962, Hickson et al.1969, Blau and Schoner 1971). Reflecting the general sociological theory of structural functionalism, the research programs emphasized what the Aston school (Pugh et al. 1963, Pugh and Hickson 1976, Pugh and Hinings 1976, Pugh and Payne 1977, Hickson and McMillan 1981) termed contextual factors. Such factors, especially size, technology, and ownership, were understood as imposing certain constraints upon the structural choices that managers could make without incurring unacceptable performance costs. This research agenda is reflected in several more contemporary approaches that either emphasize environmental conditions as ultimately determining organizational characteristics or point to the role of executive action in affecting change.

Several researchers have favoured structural determinism. First, the ecological approach (Hannan and Freeman 1989) posits that organizations that do not have organizational forms characteristic of their sector have a poorer chance of survival. Second, the strategic contingencies perspective (Donaldson 1985, 1995) stresses an adaptive functionalism that emphasizes the importance of matching internal organizational capabilities to external conditions. Third, the institutional perspective (Powell and DiMaggio 1991) in broad terms suggests that the structural forms of relevant external institutions map themselves onto organizations that depend on them for legitimacy, resources or staffing. The early critique of structural determinism focused on its perceived failure "to give due attention to the agency of choice by whoever have the power to direct the organization" (Child 1972, 2). Contrary to structural contingency theory, strategic choice theory asserts that human action is more than just an intervening process between changes in macroscopic variables (Child 1972).

Agency and Structure As Determinants of Change

As an alternative to a polarization of the two perspectives, there has been an ongoing argument made for better understanding the interaction of choice and context (Pettigrew 1987, Greenwood and Hinings 1996, Child 1997, Barley and Tolbert 1997).

Child's early work drew attention to the active role of organizational agents who had the power to influence the structures of their organizations through an essentially political process. From this perspective, while situational factors both external and internal to the organization broadly constrain structure, they are only partial determinants, with organizational actors playing an independent causal role (March and Simon 1958, Cyert and March 1963, Weick 1969, March and Olson 1976, Quinn 1980). As stated by Miles and Snow (1978,21), the strategic-choice approach essentially argues the "effectiveness of organizational adaptation hinges on the dominant coalition's perceptions of environmental conditions and the decisions it makes concerning how the organization will cope with these conditions."

Child (1997) argues that strategic choice analysis supports a role for individual organizational actors, assumes that actors will more often constitute a collective, and proposes a cycle of action and response that is organizationally and socially constrained. For Child (1997), strategic choice is realized through a process whereby those with the power to make decisions for the organization interact and negotiate among themselves. Child describes these as a dominant coalition. They are also perceived to negotiate with other coalitions both within and outside of the organization. At any point in time the possibilities of this negotiation are framed by existing structures both within and without the organization. These structures can be cognitive, material and / or relational.

Child proposes an ongoing dynamic process, involving two linked cycles, between action and structural context. He describes the first cycle as one of inner structuration involving organizational design. Within this first cycle, organizational actors seek to work upon, and are simultaneously informed or constrained by, the existing structures and routines of the organization, including its technologies and scale. The second cycle, described as outer structuration, extends to the environment. Within this second cycle, organizational actors seek to influence or to reach accommodation with specific environmental groups and more general environmental conditions. Change arises from the presence of two drivers within each cycle: the process whereby actors evaluate the structural context and the process of negotiation between different actors.

The attempt to understand public sector reform as the interaction between choice and action of coalitions and their structural context (both internally and externally) provides a useful analytic perspective. This perspective is supported by the political science literature that identifies different networks in policy communities that form advocacy coalitions responding to policy challenges in competitive and cooperative interactions (Pross 1986, Sabatier 1987, Lindquist 1992). However, within this framing a key issue is not only to identify which coalitions are involved in a particular change process or how they interact between themselves and the broader structural context of government, but also to understand better the underlying cognitive frameworks and motivations that guide such action.

Pettigrew's (1985) study of the large multinational chemical company ICI, opens up this dynamic to scrutiny. In the same vein as Child, Pettigrew (1985) also found that intermittent phases of radical organizational change were precipitated by contextual factors and that behind these events were also processes of managerial perception, choice, and action. However, Pettigrew's analysis more fully explored both the political and cultural dynamics associated with the managerial processes. Pettigrew argues that organizational culture, the dominating ideologies prevalent in the organization, filter in and filter out environmental and intra-organizational signals. This culture also structures the character of the political process inside the firm that must reference and utilize the dominant ideology. In effect, this means that those wishing to realize change must mobilize support for that change, using the dominant ideological structure at a given point in time.

This added dimension is important because it opens up an exploration of the exercise of power, through the control and management of meaning within organizations, as an important dimension of the attempt to realize radical organizational change. For Pettigrew, the outcome of radical organizational change is not simply the consequence of rational problem-solving or the constraining forces of existing structural conditions. Rather, changes are also the product of historical and continuing struggles for power and status within organizations between individuals and / or groups. These struggles for power and status are exercised in part through the ability of an individual or group to impose their interpretation of events as the dominant rationale supporting or opposing change. This is a shift from the modern idea of reason with its rational subject and the associated picture of knowledge as simply a representation of a given reality. The idea that there is true meaning to be discovered by the rational subject using reasoned inquiry is rejected. In this postmodern analysis, reality is no longer taken as a given to be discovered by a rational process of inquiry, but rather is to be produced through the control and management of meaning (Lyotard 1984).

Underlying Discourse as a Determinant of Change

This line of inquiry leads to a consideration of not only observable behavioural action, but also to how organizational actors use discourse to shape their own and others' understanding. This analysis of how organizational actors are shaped by and in turn shape discourse is an additional critical dimension to understanding how organizational actors might influence radical organizational change. This line of research is important to understanding radical organizational change, because it opens up the exploration of both the observable actions associated with such change *and* the deeper discursive structures that guide and influence such action. It recognizes the role of individuals as both shaping and being shaped by such discursive structures.

Discourse analysis can be grouped into three main approaches: *interpretive*, *instrumental / managerialist*, and *critical* (Hearacleous and Hendry 2000). An *interpretive* perspective shows how language, used as a symbolic process, is central to the development and sustaining of shared meaning (Smircich 1983) and the development of a common identity for organizational members (Evered 1983). The purpose of this approach is to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of language in meaning construction processes. Boje (1991, 1994), for example, explores the use of discourse in the shape of organizational stories. The stories serve as scripts that define organizational actors, sequence plots, and interpret past and future experience.

Obviously not everyone will accept the dominant organizational story as valid; alternative stories and versions of reality will exist. However, this line of argument posits that structures of power relationships within the organization will lead to a dominant story or narrative which de-legitimizes or silences other voices that do not accept or adapt their behaviour and views to the dominant narrative. In effect, the dominant organizational storytelling filters what voices will be heard and rewarded. The desire for reward and recognition or the personal fear of loss of income or status further coerces individuals to perform activities in alignment with a specific point of view; a point of view constructed within the textual / visual worlds of the dominant organizational storytelling (Mills et al. 2001). In this iteration, discourse is seen not so much as a medium for the social construction of shared meaning, but as a tool to achieve control. This perspective underscores the *instrumental / managerialist* approach. Here the emphasis is on how discourse can be manipulated by organizational actors to achieve managerially relevant outcomes.

While both the interpretive and instrumental approaches give primacy to human agency, the *critical* approach follows Foucault (1972), in insisting on the de-centering of the subject and the rejection of human agency as a determining influence on discourse. From this perspective, it is the discourse that determines and constitutes the subject's identity and rationality. The subject is perceived as located and trapped in discursive structures.

Heracleous and Hendry (2000), building on the work of Giddens (1984, 1987, 1993), integrate agency and structure within a single conceptual framework. They frame discourse as constituted by two dynamically interrelated levels: the surface level of communicative action and an underlying level of discursive structures, recursively linked through the modality of the actors' interpretive schemes. In this framing, the underlying or 'deep' discursive structures are understood as stable, largely implicit, and continually recurring processes and patterns that underlie and guide surface, observable events and actions. Heracleous and Hendry describe deep structures as persistent features of discourse that transcend individual texts, speakers or authors, situational contexts and communicative actions, and pervade bodies of communicative action as a whole and in the long term. In addition, they are most often implicit as opposed to explicitly stated in texts and communicative actions, and are constructive of the subjects they are about. These discursive structures are enacted or instantiated through actors' interpretive schema. Such schema are psychological frames that provide the cognitive structuring necessary for actors to construct workable cognitive representations of the world and through which actors try to establish consistency among cognitive elements and between these cognitive elements and their actions (Festinger 1959). Within Heracleous and Hendry's framework, interpretive schema are the modality through which discursive structures are instantiated at the level of communicative interaction, and through which communicative interaction can reproduce or challenge such structures.

Institutional Context as Determining Change

The work of Barley and Tolbert (1997) adds to this analysis by taking the discussion beyond the realm of the individual organization and its underlying discursive structure to that of the "institutional context" in which the organization operates. Institutional theory explains the similarity and stability of organizational arrangements for a given population of organizations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). It argues that through the repeated interaction of organizational actors, certain beliefs, practices and behavioural norms become common and dominant across a group of similar organizations. This broadens the understanding of individual interpretive schemes as embedded within deeper discursive structures at an organizational level, to understanding these as in turn being embedded in deeper discursive structures constituted at the institutional level. These tendencies can be enhanced through the existence of centralized authorities or regulatory agencies. The result is a level of conformity across a given sector about how it should operate and a force against radical organizational change.

Barley and Tolbert acknowledge that institutional contexts vary in their normative power. Their power depends on how long they have been in place, as well as how widely and deeply such norms are accepted across the organization. They argue that to the degree that norms are in place as to how things should be done, they influence the way people communicate, enact power, and determine what behaviours to sanction and reward in the day-to-day operations of the organization. They use the concept of 'scripts' as a way to convey how the norms affect behaviour. Scripts are understood to be observable, recurrent activities and patterns of interaction characteristic of a particular setting. The focus taken by Barley and Tolbert, with its emphasis on behavioural and structural scripts, adds to the emphasis placed on the role of politics and organizational culture by Pettigrew (1985), Pettigrew et al. (1992) and other European researchers (Ranson et al. 1980, Willmott 1987).

Greenwood and Hinings (1996) also emphasize the interaction between choice and context within an institutional context as constraining or facilitating change. They begin by exploring what they describe as the "normative embeddedness" of organizations within their institutional contexts. They explore exogenous characteristics from the perspective of what has become known as neo-institutional theory. First, they argue that in order to survive, organizations must accommodate institutional expectations, even though these expectations may have little to do with technical notions of performance accomplishment such as efficiency. As such, organizational behaviours are responses not only to market pressures, but also to institutional pressures (e.g., pressures from regulatory agencies, such as the state and professions, and pressures from general social expectations and the actions of leading organizations). Second, they suggest that these institutional pressures lead organizations to adopt or imitate the same organizational form or template.

This builds on what Greenwood and Hinings call "configurational" research that seeks to recognize archetypal patterns in organizational structures and systems. Greenwood and Hinings (1993) suggested that the configuration or pattern of an organization's structures and systems is provided by underpinning ideas and values, which they describe as the organization's "interpretive scheme." However, from an institutional perspective, they stress interpretive schemes as originating outside of the organization and being relevant to a population of organizations within an organizational field. This underscores organizational convergence rather than uniqueness within an organizational field or institutional context. This approach stresses that the institutional context is made up of vertically and horizontally interlocking organizations and that the pressures and prescriptions within these contexts apply to all the relevant classes of organizations. This leads to the third characteristic, a resistance to change.

The prevailing nature of change is, therefore, one of constant reproduction and reinforcement of existing modes of thought and organization (i.e., change is convergent change). Radical change is thus problematic not only because of strategy commitments or the difficulty of mobilizing internal support as noted by Pettigrew (1985), but also because of the normative embeddedness of an organization within its institutional context. Embeddedness refers to the existence of mechanisms for dissemination and the monitoring of compliance, combined with focused and consistent set of expectations. As argued by the authors, such conditions are common in governmental sectors (Hinings and Greenwood 1988). Another dimension is the relative permeability of an institutional sector to influence from other institutional sectors. The more open a sector is to other fields, the more likely that variation and change will be permitted. The implications for Greenwood and Hinings (1996) are that in a tightly coupled and permeable sector, should institutional prescriptions change dramatically, the resulting organizational response will be revolutionary (i.e. radical), not evolutionary, because of the availability of new archetypal solutions.

Intra-Organizational Elements as Influencing Change

Greenwood and Hinings (1996) also argue for the importance of several intra-organizational elements as important to the eventual outcome of any radical change process. Through the consideration of a number of both exogenous and endogenous variables, they seek to provide an understanding of how organizations interpret and respond to contextual pressures. The elements are seen as further shaping the possibility of organizational actors realizing radical organizational change.

Greenwood and Hinings (1996) try to explain the response of the individual organization to pressure in the institutional field as a function of the organization's internal or intraorganizational dynamics. They focus specifically on three aspects of an organization's internal dynamics: interests and values, power dependencies, and capacity for action.

Starting with interests and values, Greenwood and Hinings (1996) recognize the internal complexity of organizations by emphasizing that every organization is a mosaic of groups, structured around functional tasks and employment status, which leads to significant differences in orientation. Across these groups are the seeds of alternative ways of viewing the purposes of that organization, the ways in which it might be appropriately organized, and the ways in which actions might be evaluated. Groups, therefore, seek to translate their perspectives or interests into favourable allocations of scarce and valued organizational resources. A potential pressure for inertia and / or change is the extent to which key groups are satisfied or dissatisfied with how their interests are accommodated within an organization. While dissatisfaction does not provide a direction for change, it can act as a pressure for change. What becomes critically important in explaining the possibility of radical change is the pattern of how interests are being met within the current organizational structure. This leads to differing levels of commitment for or against change (Hinings and Greenwood 1988):

(1) Status quo commitment, in which all groups are committed to the prevailing institutionalized template-in-use.
(2) Indifferent commitment, in which groups are neither committed nor opposed to the template-in-use, resulting in acquiescence.
(3) Competitive commitment, in which some groups support the template-in-use, whereas others prefer an articulated alternative from within the institutional context.
(4) Reformative commitment, in which all groups are opposed to the template-in-use and prefer an articulated alternative.

Greenwood and Hinings (1996) argue that radical change will occur only if the interests of key organizational actors become associated with a competitive or reformative commitment pattern. Further, they argue that radical change will occur only in conjunction with an appropriate "capacity for action" and supportive "power dependencies." These are perceived as the enablers of radical change and warrant a brief description.

Capacity for action is the ability to manage the transition process from one template to another, which has three aspects. Greenwood and Hinings emphasize the need of organizational skills and resources to mobilize, manage and lead change. The need for transformational leadership in effecting radical organizational change is strongly supported by Tushman and Romaelli (1985) and by Nadler and Tushman (1989). Transformational leadership involves a "charismatic" set of skills around envisioning (articulating a compelling vision, setting high expectations, modelling consistent behaviours); energizing (demonstrating personal excitement about the process, expressing personal confidence, using success); and enabling (expressing personal support to those involved in the process, empathizing, expressing confidence in people).

Organizational actors also vary in their ability to influence organizational change because they have differential power. The dynamics associated with interests can be conceptualized and understood only in relation to the differential power of groups or key actors within an organization. Greenwood and Hinings (1996) argue that while change can be prompted by both market exigencies and the institutional context, that radical change will only normally occur if the dominant coalition recognizes the weaknesses of existing arrangements and is aware of potential alternatives that meet their interests. Both power and capacity for action are necessary but not sufficient conditions for radical organizational change. By themselves they will not lead to radical change, but they can and do enable or constrain it.

Greenwood's and Hinings's (1996) propositions are clear: First, radical change will only be achieved if the dominant coalition within an organization recognizes the weaknesses of existing arrangements, is aware of potential alternatives, and sees their interests and values better met by such alternatives. Second, the organization must have the ability to manage the transition process from one structure to another. In particular, appropriate capacity for action must be supported by adequate power.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused on first setting out the key ideas and issues relevant to this study from the public sector reform literature. The literature on public sector reform situates my case study within the broader context of public sector reform and, more specifically, within the theoretical context of 'new public management' and as an example of an 'alternative service delivery' (ASD) model that uses 'community governance.' The literature suggests the interaction between such ASDs and their broader political context is complex and their successful implementation difficult in the context of the Westminster model of government (Langford 1997).

In this dissertation, I build on the existing literature on public sector reform by using concepts from the literature on radical organizational change. The 'agency-structure' debate provides a useful framework to interpret the change process attempted by the Ministry responsible for child and family services. The debate focuses on the relative ability of groups of actors to achieve change within the contextual structural conditions or constraints that facilitate, block, limit or regulate the transformative capacity of group action. I build on the work of those researchers who argue for understanding the interaction of choice and context (Pettigrew 1987, Child 1997, Greenwood and Hinings 1996, Barley and Tolbert 1997). Context is understood as institutional in scope (Greenwood and Hinings 1996, Barley and Tolbert 1997) and as underpinned and influenced by competing discourses (Heracleous and Hendry 2000) and mediated by intra-organizational variables (Greenwood and Hinings 1996). This literature of radical organizational change brings a useful process perspective to understanding public sector reform, and which perspective goes beyond the surface level of action to the underlying influences that shape the surface action. It opens up the exploration of processes of managerial perception, choice, action, and competency that are linked to continuing struggles for power and status within organizations as critical dynamics associated with radical organizational change.

In the next chapter I synthesize these concepts, arguments and insights in to a coherent analytical model to interpret the attempted radical organizational change by exploring my stated research questions.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL APPROACH AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the introductory chapter, I provided an initial overview of the attempted redesign of child and family services in Alberta, raising a number of questions about the initiative. In the subsequent chapter, I situated the redesign in relation to the two research literatures of public sector reform and radical organizational change. In this chapter, I focus on how I answer those questions by using a theoretical approach that integrates concepts from both the public sector reform and radical organizational change literatures. I situate this theoretical approach within a qualitative case study research methodology. In this chapter I also discuss the research challenges posed by the research setting and my own role as researcher.

My case study examines the limitations of collaborative community partnerships, used as both a management and a governance tool, to achieve improvements in child and family services. I was concerned with the factors that supported and constrained its ability to improve services. I use the literatures to situate, orient and link the redesign to broader trends in public sector reform and to build a framework for understanding the organizational change process.

3.2 The Research Challenges and Proposed Solutions

Behind any attempt to understand, explain or influence a significant organizational change process is perspective: how a subject or its parts are viewed. Pettigrew (1987) underscores the tremendous difficulty of making sense of organizational change when he notes that "where we sit, not only influences where we stand, but also what we see." Inevitably there are many different perspectives on the provision of social services to children and families dependent on where one sits: an abused child or poor family, a social worker, a manager, tax payer, or politicians of different ideological stripes. Inevitably there are many perspectives or story lines that could be taken in looking at an attempt at radical organizational change.

Boje (1994) illustrates this in a unique way using a long running play in Los Angeles, called Tamara. In the play, a dozen characters tell their stories before a walking, sometimes running audience. Instead of a stationary audience looking at a single stage, the play takes place in a large house and the audience fragments into small groups that follow characters from one room to the next, from one floor to the next. Audience members can follow any particular character that interests them as they, in turn, meet and interact with other characters. Audience members can drift and try to follow several characters, each time trying to catch up and make sense of the action that has taken place while they have been away. Groups of friends split up, follow different characters and then try to piece together the story line after the play, thereby co-creating different stories. Assuming that there are a dozen stages and a dozen story tellers, according to Boje's calculation the number of story lines an audience could trace in its networking as a wandering audience chasing the wandering discourses of Tamara is 479,001,600. Both Pettigrew and Boje's descriptions capture the challenge and fascination of researching large-scale organizational change: managing perspective and multiple possible story lines.

From a research perspective, my challenge was to analyze from a number of perspectives the redesign process, which involves the ongoing interaction between multiple organizational actors, across different organizational levels, interacting with different parts of the external environment over time (Pettigrew 1985). This requires acknowledgement of the limitations of any one account and the value of others. Within these limitations, I saw the research task as threefold. First, I must produce a 'satisfactory' account linking agency and context (Van de Ven and Poole 1988, Donaldson 1995). Second, I must provide a satisfactory account of the possibilities of different organizational actors implementing radical change within a specific institutional context. Third, I must draw from this analysis a better understanding of the possibilities for public sector reform through the use of such collaborative partnerships.

For Donaldson (1995), accounting for the respective roles of context and actors has a number of methodological problems, which lead to evermore complex and open-ended accounts that must find a pattern in a potentially infinite number of events. He argues the structure-agency interaction framework suggests studying organizational change by examining too many variables. These variables might include situation, structure and performance, but also the values, preferences, beliefs, perceptions, ideologies, interests and power of every actor involved in the decision-making process and the political interactions between them. Donaldson's argument presents a number of challenges that must be faced by any researcher of large scale, radical organizational change.

I have confronted Donaldson's challenges in a number of ways: First, I have used Heracleous and Hendry's (2000) conceptualization of underlying discursive structures as a means to simplify the potentially overwhelming number of storylines that might be considered as part of the change process. I have linked this first to Child's (1997) concept of coalitions as a means to circumscribe the large number of organizational actors by grouping them in one of several groups and then explored how these groups interact in support of the particular discursive structures underlying the two institutional contexts of social work and government. Second, I adopted Barley and Tolbert's (1997) concept of critical organizational scripts and Heracleous and Hendry's (2000) discourse analysis as a means to explore systematically, in a manageable way, both the discourses underlying the institutional contexts and the process of interaction associated with these discourses. Third, I have been conscious and explicit throughout my research of bringing my own analytical perspective to this process, formed through my own experience of the redesign, twenty years experience working in the field of child and family social services as a manager within that field and, for the latter part of this research project, as a CEO charged with affecting the change process. Finally, I have informed my perspective by actively using the public sector reform and radical organizational change literatures in my analysis. I will now elaborate each of these elements.

Dominant Discourses and Supporting Coalitions

As noted earlier, Heracleous and Hendry (2000) explore the role of discursive structures in organizational change. Their analysis opens up the exploration of both the observable actions associated with change and the deeper discursive structures that guide and influence such action. It recognizes the role of individuals or groups as both shaping and being shaped by such discursive structures. In reviewing the texts associated with the redesign process, I have used the concept of deep discursive structures to move iteratively beyond the multiplicity of surface level communicative actions to discern the critical underlying dominant discursive structures. Through this process, I identified two underlying discursive structures fundamentally in contention with each other and associated with different institutional contexts. On the one side is a social work discourse associated with the social work profession and on the other, a New Public Management discourse associated with government. This analysis framed my research agenda as one of exploring the interaction between the two discourses and their respective roles in facilitating or inhibiting the radical organizational change process.

Child (1997) argues that strategic choice is realized through a process in which those with the power to make decisions for the organization interact / negotiate among themselves (so forming a dominant coalition), as well as with other organizational and external coalitions or groups. The possibilities of these negotiations are in turn framed by the existing structures both within and without the organization. The political science literature points to the same dynamic when it suggests that within any policy community there will be several advocacy coalitions active in trying to influence the policy process and content; at any point in time, one coalition will usually be dominant within that community (Pross 1986, Sabatier 1987, Lindquist 1992). In this research I have used the concept of coalition of organizational actors as a means to circumscribe the range of values, preferences, beliefs, perceptions, ideologies, interests and power of every actor involved in the decision-making process and the political interactions between them (Donaldson 1995). I identified several coalitions of organizational actors who played a critical role in the redesign process and explored their roles as agents that supported one of the two underlying discursive structures. This was done retrospectively, toward the end of the attempted redesign process, based on my observation of who had played or attempted to play a significant and demonstrable role in shaping the change process in some critical way.

Based on the above process, I identified the following groups:

- Progressive Conservative Cabinet / Caucus,
- Senior managers in Alberta Family and Social Services,
- The Office of the Commissioner, and
- Child and Family Service Authority Steering Committees / Boards and Senior Management.
- The Office of the Children's Advocate
- The Social Work Profession

- Liberal Opposition
- Alberta Union of Public Employees
- Media (news papers, sector specific media)

With each group, I then analyzed how their surface communicative actions was shaped by or shaped either of the two underlying discourses associated with social work or New Public Management. Utilizing Greenwood and Hining's (1996) analytical framework, I examined the action of the coalitions by assessing their perspective and commitment to change, as well as their capacity and power to affect change with the context that surrounded the redesign.

Scripts

Within each of these coalitions there was inevitably a range of perspectives and, over time, different organizational actors. The challenge was to identify if there were critical points when these coalitions spoke with one organizational voice. I did this by building on Barley and Tolbert's (1997) concept of scripts and Heracleous and Hendry's (2000) structurational view of discourse as comprising surface communication supported by underlying discursive structures or interpretive schemes. Scripts are understood to be observable, recurrent activities and patterns of interaction characteristic of a particular setting and represent discourse at the communicative level. Within organizations, certain scripts require the organizational leadership to accept a position or perspective that is seen as formally representative of the perspective of a particular group within the organization, thereby becoming the basis for subsequent action. In conducting this research, I identified a number of key documents ('scripts') produced by the various groups of dominant organizational actors that speak to the redesign process directly or contextually. These documents have been utilized as the primary data sources for this research (see Appendix I for a detailed list of sources):

- Progressive Conservative Cabinet / Caucus: annual business and budget plans, published speeches, news releases.
- Managers of Alberta Family and Social Services: Annual Business Plans, pubic policy statements, public reports, News Releases.
- The Office of the Children's Advocate: Annual Reports.
- The Office of the Commissioner: Reports, policy statements, News Releases.
- Child and Family Service Authority Steering Committees/Boards and Senior Management: Service Plans, Business Plans.
- Social Work Profession: Contemporary research papers, reports.
- Liberal Opposition: Public reports on the redesign process, News Releases.
- Alberta Union of Public Employees: Public reports on the redesign process.
- Media (newspapers, sector specific media): Analysis of news releases and commentary of events associated with the redesign process.

I argue that these source materials are data from which to provide a satisfactory account for analyzing agency and contextual structure as it presented itself though the redesign process. Discourse analysis, in the broad sense of utilizing textual data in order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon, has a rich and varied heritage in the social sciences, spanning the fields of sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science and history (O'Connor 1995). A discourse analysis of the radical organizational change reflected in the above documents needs to address adequately both *context* and *temporality* in its analysis. This requires going beyond explicit communicative actions to identify and track over time deeper, discursive structural features and link them theoretically to wider social structures (Heracleous and Hendry 2000).

First, with respect to *context,* a discourse analysis needs a developed sense of and systematic approach to both context and text (Fairclough 1992). Texts were studied as the concrete medium and outcome of a purposeful process of production, reflexively monitored by their authors. Inquiry into this process involved exploring or theorizing about the author's or speaker's intentions, as well as applying practical knowledge about writing or speaking with a certain style for a particular audience (Giddens 1979, 1987, 1993). I attempted to improve my interpretive accuracy of texts by paying analytical attention to the settings that produced the text, the ideas that inspired the texts, and the perceived characteristics of the intended audience (Giddens 1987).

In terms of analyzing the settings, I drew on Pettigrew's (1985) concept of *levels of analysis*, by situating the identified coalitions and their texts in one of three organizational levels or settings within government or as part of the environment external to government. The Steering Committees / CFSA Boards are structurally nestled within and linked to the context of the Ministry and Office of the Commissioner, which in turn are nestled within and linked to the broader government through the Cabinet structure, other ministries and the government caucus. The idea of seeing the Steering Committees / CFSA boards as nestled within the broader context of government recognizes the 'institutional context' (Greenwood and Hinings

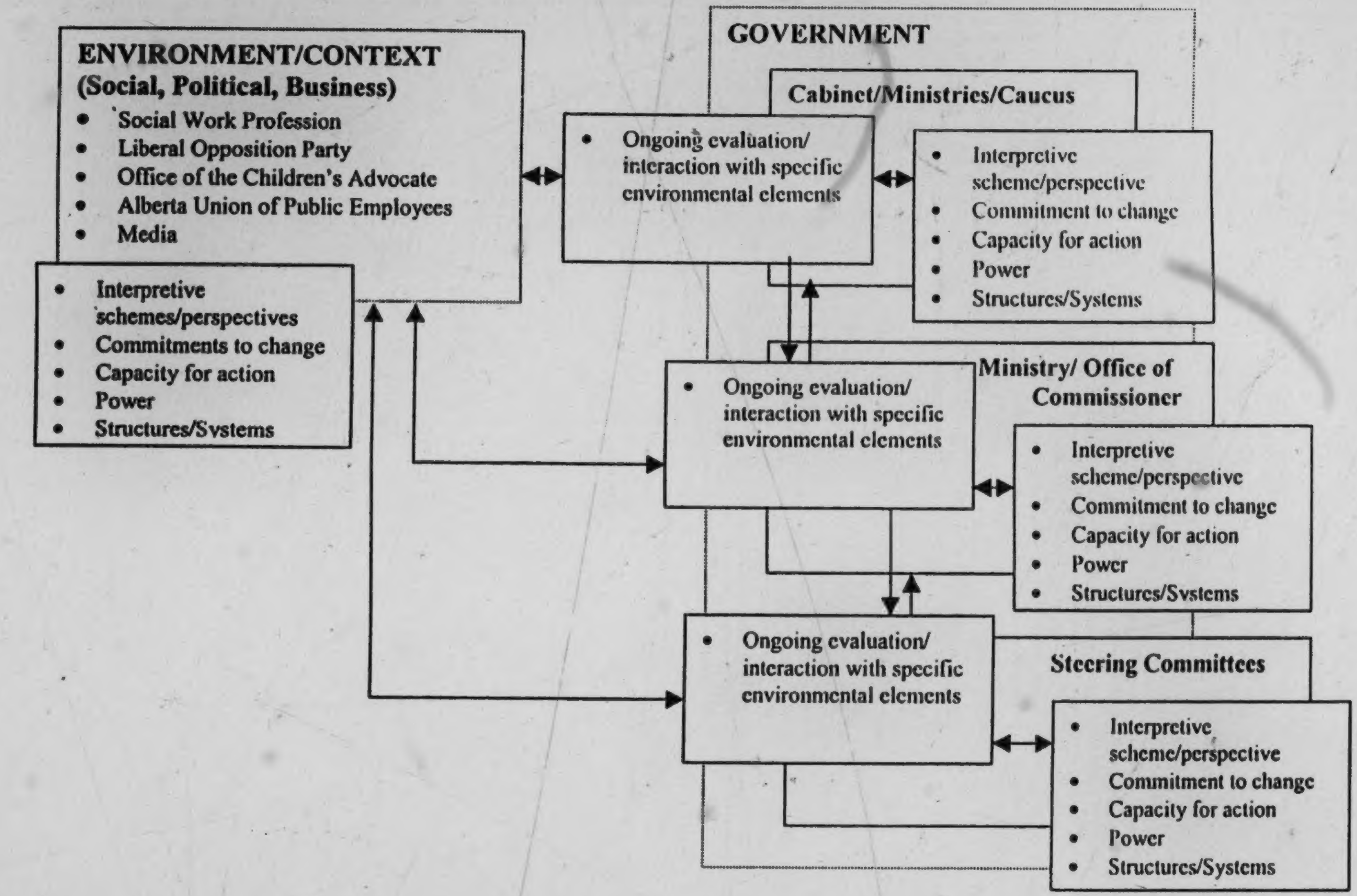
1996) in which the redesign occurred. In turn these three levels within government are seen to be differentially linked to a broader environment. This broader environment is considered to be populated by a number of coalitions who were active in attempting to shape the redesign: the social-work profession, the Liberal Opposition, the Office of the Children's Advocate, Alberta Union of Public Employees, and the Media (newspapers, sector-specific media).

Paying attention to *temporality* from a methodological perspective necessitated that my analysis of communicative actions (seen as textual fragments that together with other fragments constitute a discourse) took into account the timing of the communicative actions as an aspect of textual context. Also, I tracked texts and their contexts longitudinally, noting shifts over time, as well as uncovering and theorizing their interconnections and deep structures over time (Heracleous and Hendry 2000). This approach allowed both an exploration of the coalitions' differential commitments to change (Greenwood and Hinings 1996) and their underlying perspective or interpretive scheme (Giddens 1984).

The elements and linkages of this integrative theoretical and analytical framework are represented figuratively below (Figure 3.1). The Steering Committees / Boards are situated within the institutional context of government comprised of the Ministry / Office of the Commissioner and the broader context of Cabinet, other ministries, and the government caucus. These are seen as differentially linked to the broader environment comprised of the Liberal Opposition party, the Office of the Children's

Advocate, the Alberta Union of Public Employees and the media. Each level within government differentially interacts with the external environment based on its interpretive scheme or perspective, its commitment to the change process, its capacity for action, its power and its structures and systems. Langford (1997) argues that any analysis of an ASD organization inclusive of citizen involvement must confront the issue of how to work out the distribution of policy making, program design, program delivery and accountability. This multi-level model allows consideration of how the distribution was affected, as well as an exploration of the dynamics associated with that distribution. This modeling fits well with the broader case study research methodology and research principles proposed by Yin (1989). Yin (1989) suggests that the aim of a case study can be: (1) to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes; (2) to describe the real life context in which an intervention has occurred; or (3) to explain the causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for survey or experimental strategies. All three aims would apply to this proposed dissertation. The proposed design is a single case focused on the *how* and *why* of the redesign of Ministry of children's services in Alberta, exploring contextual and intra- organizational constraints on the utilization of a specific alternative service delivery model premised on collaborative community partnerships. Yin notes that the evidence collected from multi-case design is often more compelling. To offset this potential weakness I have tried to situate the redesign initiative under study clearly within the

Figure 3.1 Model For Understanding Attempted Radical Organizational Change in Government

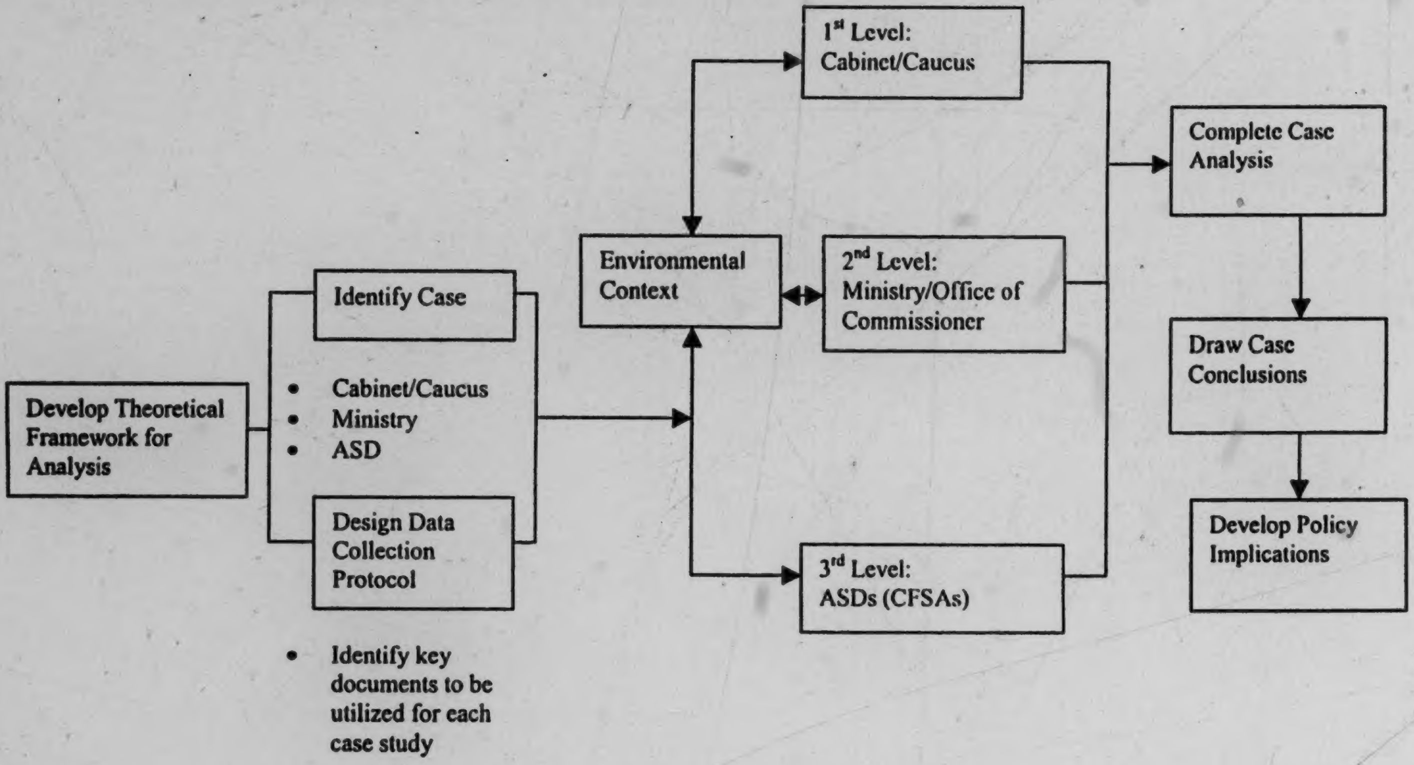

ENVIRONMENT/CONTEXT
(Social, Political, Business)
Social Work Profession
Liberal Opposition Party
Office of the Children's Advocate
Alberta Union of Public Employees
Media
Interpretive schemes/perspectives
Commitments to change
Capacity for action
Power
Structures/Systems
GOVERNMENT
Cabinet/Ministries/Caucus
Ongoing evaluation/ interaction with specific environmental elements
Interpretive scheme/perspective
Commitment to change
Capacity for action
Power
Structures/Systems
Ministry/ Office of Commissioner
Ongoing evaluation/ interaction with specific environmental elements
Interpretive scheme/perspective
Commitment to change
Capacity for action
Power
Structures/Systems
Steering Committees
Ongoing evaluation/ interaction with specific environmental elements
Interpretive scheme/perspective
Commitment to change
Capacity for action
Power
Structures/Systems

broader literature on public sector reform literature to more clearly facilitate comparisons with other case studies (Wilson 1989, DiIulio et al. 1993, Aucoin 1995, Savioe 1995, Ford and Zussman 1997, Hikel 1997, Caiden 1998, Pollit 1998). Further, in the concluding chapter I summarily compare and contrast this case study to similar governance structures used in both the education and health care sectors. This provides the basis for identifying future research that would build on the conclusions of my research. In undertaking the case study, I examine the three key organizational levels (cabinet / caucus, Ministry, alternative service delivery agency) in relation to the change initiative and then compare and contrast them with each other. I explore the interaction between the different organizational levels on the outcome of the redesign process by examining and interpreting the differences that exist between the different organizational levels in their perspectives, commitment to change, capacity and power linked to the contextual constraints or enabling factors. The analysis facilitates a discussion of the possibilities for governments using collaborative community partnerships as an alternative service delivery model and their potential to deliver improvement in the management and governance of services.

The Role Of The Researcher

From a methodological perspective, the approach to discourse analysis I have taken requires researchers to immerse themselves in the contextual milieu of the texts (Heracleous and Hendry 2000). Due to my intimate involvement with the field, and the redesign in particular, this was achieved. However, one of the key challenges to

Figure 3.2 Case Study Methodology (adapted from Yin 1989, 56)


Develop Theoretical Framework for Analysis
Identify Case
Cabinet/Caucus
Ministry
ASD
Design Data Collection Protocol
Identify key documents to be utilized for each case study
Environmental Context
1st Level: Cabinet/Caucus
2nd Level: Ministry/Office of Commissioner
3rd Level: ASDs (CFSAs)
Complete Case Analysis
Draw Case Conclusions
Develop Policy Implications

this research initiative has been my own role as both an employee of government and as a senior executive manager, fully engaged in and responsible in part for the change process. This has been both a potential strength and possible weakness to the research project. On the one hand, this has been a potential strength, because of the insights and depth of knowledge that my role has given me, my *de facto* immersion in the contextual milieu that produced the texts. On the other hand, it has been a potential weakness, because of the biases that arise from my key involvement as a leader of the change process, my inability to conduct interviews because of my senior management role within the organization, and the constraints placed upon me in respect of organizational confidentiality. Each of these potential weaknesses needed to be accounted for in developing my approach to this research project.

With respect to bias, I have tried to remain conscious of this throughout my analysis, utilizing guidelines suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994, 278-280). First, I am explicit about my role and status within the change process and the inevitable biases that will exist. I have been explicit about the public data set used for the research (Appendix I), facilitating secondary analysis of the data by other researchers. Within the dissertation, I have tried to present adequate amounts of source data such that the reader is able to draw their own independent conclusions from the chain of evidence presented (Miles and Huberman 1994). In effect, readers are able to answer whether the findings of the study make sense. This adds to the reliability of the findings. Beyond internal validity, I have interpreted the findings using the broader research literatures on public sector reform and radical organizational change to establish a level of transferability of the findings. Specifically, I have compared and contrasted the redesign of child and family services to similar change processes initiated by government in the education and health care sectors.

Interviews may have been a valuable addition to the textual analysis, but were considered inappropriate given my role and status within the redesign process. This weakness, I argue, is off-set by the approach I take to textual analysis, moving beyond communicative events to a deeper structural analysis over time (Heracleous and Hendry 2000), supplemented by my own immersion within the context and the insights this provides. Precisely because of my role as manager, I was able to extract greater insights from the public documents. I also argue that there is a limited potential of interviews to provide more depth to my analysis. Many of the individuals close to the redesign who may have been interviewed, would also of necessity been circumspect or biased in their comments due to their role and status within the redesign process. In effect, I argue the value of interviews in addition to the textual analysis and personal insight should not be overstated as a weakness. Rather, there is a trade off between the insights from my immersion in the context of the redesign, my familiarity and many discussions with key organizational actors, and the value of an independent researcher gaining limited access to a number of key players associated with the change process.

However, I also need to emphasize that throughout my analysis I have been conscious of managing and respecting the issue of organizational confidentiality. I have used only documents accessible to the public from various libraries and those documents shared with the community by the Commissioner's Office / Steering Committees or by the government / Ministry.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have synthesized key concepts, arguments and insights from the literatures on public sector reform and radical organizational change in to an analytical model through which I could address my research interests. The model facilitates a careful analysis of the impact of the institutional contexts of government and social work in facilitating and / or inhibiting the radical change process led by a collaborative community governance initiative.

I have also addressed the research challenges posed by the research setting and my own role as researcher. I have described how I managed those challenges and the resulting research methodology and data sources used for my dissertation. In particular, I have argued that my role placed parameters around the study, but if I had not been in that role I would not have been able to identify as clearly, to research and to interpret the change process. In the next two chapters, I commence my analysis of the change process by describing and examining two key elements of the institutional context: the institutional context provided by the social work profession and the institutional context of the Klein government.

CHAPTER 4

THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION AS AN INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT FOR THE REDESIGN

4.1 Introduction

I have argued that critical to understanding the process and outcome of the redesign, is an understanding of its institutional context (Greenwood and Hinings 1996, Barley and Tolbert 1997), along with its underlying discourses (Heracleous and Hendry 2000). The institutional context of the redesign of child and family services is made up of two dominant, interlinked and overlapping institutional contexts: the social work profession and government. Social work, with its origins outside of government, has its own philosophical underpinnings, perspective and professional affiliation. Many of the organizational actors involved in the redesign process saw their primary affiliation to this institutional context. In twenty years of working the field, I have never heard a governmental social worker describe him or herself as a civil servant. In contrast, the institutional context of government has its own philosophical underpinnings and perspective. The differences between the two set up a dynamic within the institutional context that, as I will explain later in the dissertation, is important to the redesign process. In the present chapter I set the basis for analyzing the dynamic by examining the institutional context of the social worker profession.

Social work evolved as a professional group that advocated on behalf of families and children who often found themselves disenfranchised from the mainstream of society.

They lobbied government to play a role and assume responsibility for families and children experiencing social difficulties. As government assumed this role, social workers were effectively incorporated into government, but their roots and professional affiliation remain outside. In this chapter, I explore the values, beliefs and analysis arising from of the institutional social work context. This context interacted with and influenced the change process in important ways, not as a clearly identified group that expressed its views in an explicit fashion, but as a dispersed body of organizational actors that made up the fabric of the sector and, through a myriad of daily interactions, influenced the process. Although social work professionals are represented by a professional association, I found little evidence of the association's impact on the redesign as an institutional entity; however, as a professional group, its perspective pervades the organization. I intend to expose this perspective, the underlying social work discourse, through three lenses. First, I explore its legal, policy and philosophical underpinnings. I then look at the evolution of social work in Alberta, its dominant issues and concerns over the past one hundred years. Finally, I explore its discourse through the concerns and issues expressed through contemporary social work research literature. I argue that in combination these provide a valid representation of the dominant social work discourse onto which, or into which, the government's own redesign agenda was introduced.

4.2 The Legal and Philosophical Underpinnings of Social Work

Part of analyzing the institutional context provided by social work is to build an understanding of its legal and philosophical underpinnings as they relate to child welfare. Child and family services became a key element of the 'Keynesian welfare state.' The Keynesian welfare state that emerged after World War II found itself at any point in time involved in a contradictory set of strategies seeking simultaneously to maintain the economic dominance of capital, but also trying to challenge and erode capital's power, and trying to compensate for its disruptive and disorganizing consequences (Offe 1984). It was this latter strategy that led the state to accept more fully and then to promote a growing level of state intervention in all aspects of social life.

Growing state intervention was not just a set of services but rather a system of ideas about society, the family and women expressed as policy and found in concrete terms through a series of social programs and benefits (Baker 1995). Family policy forms a subset of the larger set of policies and strategies that make up the welfare state. It can be defined as "a coherent set of principles about the state's role in family life which is supplemented through legislation or a plan of action." It can be considered as falling into three basic but interdependent categories (McDaniel 1990):

- Laws relating to family issues (marriage, adoption, reproduction, divorce, custody and child support);
- Policies to support family income (tax concessions, family and child allowances, subsidized housing, maternity and parental leave benefits, the enforcement of court ordered child support); and

- Provision of direct services (child welfare, prevention of family violence, child care, services to children and adults with disabilities, home care).

In practice it is often fragmented and contradictory (Baker 1995). This fragmentation is explained in part by its struggle to encompass often competing implicit values about equality and justice. As well, there are both explicit and implicit competing ideas about who constitutes a family, what obligations family members have to each other and to the broader community, and what rights individual family members can expect to have protected by the state (Wilson 1977, Williams 1989, Lewis 1993). Perhaps even more fundamental to understanding the fragmentation is to note that the role of the state in the institution of the family remains contested. The debate centres on the desirability, level and efficacy of state involvement as opposed to less involvement of 'government' and more dependence on self, family and community. In the century prior to the emergence of the welfare state, the institution of the family had gradually moved from the 'private' into the 'public' domain through the advocacy of social activists who were the precursors to contemporary social workers. However, viewing family life as 'private' and substantially outside the realm of government regulation remains strong in many quarters of society. So while the development of family policy is evident across all post World War II western states, the degree and scope of development has varied based on differing histories and the outcomes of debates between differing ideologies.

As set out by Baker (1995), underpinning the socio-legal framework of child welfare legislation both in Canada and many other English-speaking countries are four main concepts. The first is *patria potestas*, underscoring the paternal power or the integrity and power of the family. The second is *parens patria*, the state as parent, or the authority of the courts to make decisions on behalf of those unable to act for themselves. The third is the *best interests of the child*, a concept used to justify state intervention in child neglect and delinquency cases and to make custody decisions after divorce. The fourth is the *child as person before the law*. Children's rights are protected by both federal and provincial legislation. Significant at the federal level, the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms ensured that parents whose children are apprehended from their care are entitled to a judicial hearing within a reasonable time. It also restricted the authority of child protection workers to apprehend children without prior judicial authorization. This set a trend towards more clearly defined decision making which would allow for less discretion by both judges and social workers.

In operation, therefore, any child welfare system must try to achieve a balance between child protection and family preservation. Within the eight countries (Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States) studied by Baker (1995), three main models of child protection are apparent: involuntary services, voluntary services, and prevention. The first model is initiated by a complaint, often from another professional such as a doctor, teacher or daycare professional. The second involves a voluntary request by the child, parent, or family for assistance. The third is a collection of programs available to all parents and children, or focused on families considered at risk of abuse, neglect or behavioural problems because of their poverty. In Canada, Australia, the United States and Great Britain, child protection (essentially involuntary in its operation) is the major focus of the child welfare systems. These countries primarily adopt what Armitage (1993) would describe as a *residual* view of child welfare, while other countries (France, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands) take an *institutional* focus by also strongly emphasizing prevention and other pro-active measures. To what is Armitage referring?

Armitage (1993) argues that some clarity can be brought to understanding the different ideologies underpinning child welfare practice by categorizing social policy under three general approaches: residual, institutional, and social developmental. The *residual* formulation is based on the view that most families can look after themselves and that the intervention of the state can, and properly should, be limited to those situations where families have failed to provide for the welfare of children and, as such, the state must intervene in the familyies' responsibilities. This is essentially an expression of an ideology that emphasizes the independence of individuals, the responsibility of families, and a minimal role for the state. The *institutional approach* also views the family as a private institution, but argues that it requires a planned and supportive environment through attention to income security, employment, day care, counselling, and other social services. This represents more of an ideology that promotes collective responsibility, with an enlarged and coordinating role for the state. The *social developmental* (also known as structural or radical) view calls for the examination and reform of the societal structures that have led to the existence of social problems. A predominantly systemic rather than individual approach, it was linked to a more radical socialist perspective and subsequently to new social movements with their more radical critiques of the distribution of power and wealth. The preferred orientation to social policy interacts with a number of contextual elements—demographic, economic and political—to shape actual social policy (Esping-Anderson 1990, Pampel and Adams 1992, Wennemo 1992, 1994, McQuaig 1993). Choosing one of these orientations over another will have the effect of inhibiting the development of some kinds of social policy while encouraging others. Armitage's categorization provides a useful typology through which to interpret the change process in child and family welfare services. It potentially can be used to contrast the various approaches espoused by social workers, the Steering Committees / Boards and the Klein government.

In practice, a residual system operates along a continuum from non-legalistic, interventionist through to legalistic, non-interventionist or family autonomy approaches (Barnhorst 1986). The interventionist approach gives broad powers to child welfare authorities to intervene in families at the discretion of social workers, while non-interventionist legislation provides limited powers to child welfare authorities and requires that social workers avoid removing children from parents wherever possible. This approach allows narrower grounds for state intervention, includes more specific definitions, and emphasizes parental rights more than the interventionist approach. Barnhorst places the child welfare legislation of both British

Columbia and the Yukon at the interventionist end of the continuum, with that of Alberta and Ontario at the opposite end. The assessment of Alberta's position as non-interventionist is supported in *The Need for Balance* (Alberta, Family and Social Services 1996). The document argues that prior to the implementation of a new Child Welfare Act in 1985, child protection services reflected an interventionist approach, while the Child Welfare Act proclaimed in 1985 adopted a family autonomy approach. The new Act narrowed the criteria for determining when children require protection, created a more legalistic process for justifying interventions, and established individual rights for children, parents, and others. Notwithstanding the government's positioning of the child welfare legislation within a residual context, my own experience suggests that social workers in Alberta see themselves affiliated more clearly with the institutional approach, and to a lesser extent the social development approach. Few would associate themselves with a residual approach.

4.3 The History of Child Welfare in Alberta

A second lens through which to explore the dominant themes associated with the social work discourse is the history of social work in the province of Alberta. Pettigrew (1985, 1987) argues that analysis of change is often *a-historical*, thus diminishing the ability to assess the significance or magnitude of change. In addition, a historical overview allows identification and analysis of the 'deep' or dominant themes or ideas that constitute the discourse associated with this particular social entity (Heracleous and Hendry, 2000). The dominant focus of redesign has been child welfare because of its size and its public profile dealing with vulnerable children. I will now briefly outline the history of child welfare in Alberta.

As noted above, in practice, the power that parents hold over their children has been gradually restricted over the past century and a half (Baker 1995). The first Children's Aid Society appeared in Canada in the early 1890s; legislation to protect children under a certain age from neglect and abuse followed. In 1893, the Ontario legislature enacted the Children's Protection Act. As noted by Reichwein and Reichwein (1996), soon after Alberta became a province in 1905, Alexander Rutherford's Liberal government passed the first Children's Protection Act in 1909. The Act instituted a superintendent of neglected and dependent children. Children's Aid Societies (CASs) were established in Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat as the designated agents responsible for child protection services. Where no CAS operated, the provincial superintendent assumed the CAS's role.

As early as 1920, in what was to become a consistent theme right through to the present day, the then superintendent K.C. McLeod expressed concerns about the rising costs of dealing with child welfare. This particular concern for costs resulted in a decrease of government services during the 1920s. In 1925, the United Farmers of Alberta passed an Act Respecting the Welfare of Children. The Act broadened the superintendent's role and may have contributed to the decline of CASs. This period also saw the passing of the Sexual Sterilization Act in 1928 and the establishment of the Eugenics Board in 1929. The children of "foreign born" immigrants were seen as inferior and held to blame for much of the crime and mental and physical handicaps that were growing in Alberta. The legislation was a move to prevent any burden on society that children of such parentage might prove.

The 1930s Depression resulted in the province, CASs, municipalities and voluntary services seeing increased demand and expectations for child welfare services. During this period, the Social Credit government brought relief functions together, including child welfare services, under a Bureau of Relief and Public Welfare. Again, repeated public concerns were voiced about child welfare services, focusing on conflicting powers and ill-defined relationships of provincial, municipal, public and voluntary welfare services. Issues were also noted around the lack of professionalization of child welfare when compared with other provinces (Reichwein and Reichwein 1996).

In 1943, an internal government child welfare committee reviewed these concerns. The review led to further centralization of child welfare responsibilities with the Department of Public Welfare replacing the Bureau of Relief and Public Welfare in 1944, and a reworking of the Child Welfare Act. However, concerns about services remained and, immediately after the war, the Alberta Chapter of the Imperial Order, Daughters of the Empire (IODE) hired Charlotte Whitton along with a team of staff to review the state of social programs. Her report, *Welfare in Alberta* (1947) notes the issue of poorly trained social workers and that of the then 2,700 children receiving services, 1,600 were in institutions criticized for their poor quality. The adoption process in Alberta was also severely criticized, which led the government to launch a lawsuit against Charlotte Whitton, amongst others, following magazine and newspaper articles. In broad terms, her report recommended new leadership, decentralization, privatization, improved licensing and improved adoption practices. Thompson (1989) notes that in response an Alberta Royal Commission was appointed in 1948 to again investigate child welfare issues. He describes the resulting Howson Commission, in contrast to Whitton's report, as supportive of the ongoing centralized control of child welfare leading to the disbanding of CASs in preference for municipal and provincial control through an amended Child Welfare Act.

Following the furor of the immediate post war years, Thomson (1989) argues that the 1950s settled down to relative calm. During the mid-1950s, the whole concept of child neglect was re-examined and recognized as a much more complex, widespread problem than previously realized. Cost-sharing was implemented whereby under the Canada Assistance Plan, Ottawa paid 50% of the province's child welfare expenses and by the late 1950s, the province also started [illegible] reimburse municipalities for 100% of their child welfare costs.

The early 1960s saw incremental growth in demand for services. In particular, there was a significant increase in apprehensions of Aboriginal children, with the vast majority being placed with non-Aboriginal caregivers. In 1966, a new child welfare act was passed (Alberta, Child Welfare Act and Preventative Social Services Act 1966). The new legislation transferred Statutory Protection Services from municipalities to the Province, but left the municipalities responsible for preventative programming aimed at reducing unmarried parenthood and reducing the number of children coming into care. This later would evolve into the Family and Community Support Services described above.

The 1970s economic boom and rapid population growth resulted in a further expansion of services. The Child Welfare Branch began to contract out both family support and group care services. Attempts were made starting around 1973 to strengthen foster care as an alternative to institutional group care. This followed a report by a government appointed committee, chaired by Judge A.P. Catonio, which had been established to investigate foster care and related problems in child welfare (Alberta, Report on Child Foster Care 1972). The committee had made some fifty recommendations for change. In 1974, the department went through another name change, becoming the Department of Social Services and Community Health. Further restructuring would again take place in the early 1980s with the partial decentralization of provincial social services into a regional structure comprised of six geographical zones noted earlier and in place at the beginning of the most recent redesign initiative.

In March of 1980, Mr. Justice Cavanagh was appointed to lead an inquiry into the child welfare system in Alberta (Alberta, Board of Review: Child Welfare Act and Social Care Facilities Licensing Act 1983). This followed a year of sustained criticism of the Child Welfare Branch starting with the Alberta Ombudsman in 1979 and continued by the Edmonton Journal, which had declared itself the official opposition

(Thompson 1989). The Board of Review released its report in 1983 noting that it was difficult to reach conclusions about the operation of a system that is being changed all the time, but did feel that it had been able to identify a range of issues confronting the child welfare system and made over sixty recommendations to address them. Among the issues identified were a lack of planning for children in care, insufficient treatment beds and special residences to keep pace with the demand for services, inadequately trained and supervised staff, inadequately screened and trained foster parents, low morale and high turnover amongst individual social workers, who were described as overworked and burning out with excessive workloads. Almost immediately after Cavanagh's report came the Thomlinson Report[1] in September 1984. It reviewed the suicide of Richard Cardinal while in the long term care of the Province. Richard Cardinal died on June 26, 1984, after "thirteen years, eight months and ten days in the care of Alberta Social Services and Community Health Department" (Alberta, Family and Social Services, Case Management Review 1984, 1). During this time, he had been placed with sixteen different families and in six group homes. While making specific recommendations relating to policies, standards and procedures, the report more importantly put a personal face to a perceived systemic crisis in Child Welfare services.

Subsequent to the Cavanagh and the Thomlinson reports, a new Child Welfare Act was proclaimed on July 1, 1985. An information guide to the new act described it as an attempt to clarify the government's role with respect to child welfare issues and reflect the principles of effective casework practice (Alberta, Family and Social Services, Child Welfare In Progress 1986). This legislation heralded the contemporary period into which the restructuring initiative, the focus of this dissertation, would be introduced. The information guide states the philosophical principles that underlie the intent of the Child Welfare Act and upon which Departmental services to children and families are to be developed and delivered. The document emphasizes that within the constraints of available resources and respecting basic human rights, the Department believes that:

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[1] Although commonly known as the Thomlinson Report its correct title is 'Case Management review, Northwest Region, Alberta Social Services and Community Health. The report was initiated by the Deputy Minister, Alberta Social Services and Community Health.

> While its services must be responsive to people's needs, services should not replace or interfere with the responsibility and initiative of individuals, families and communities to meet their own needs. To the greatest extent possible, services should develop and enhance independence; and should involve individuals, families and communities in the development and delivery of services which affect them. When services are provided, they should be delivered in a way which minimizes intrusion, disruption and restriction (Alberta, Family and Social Services, Child Welfare In Progress 1986).

The pre-eminence of the family is underlined, along with the importance of prevention and early intervention, the quality of services and accountability. The act was the result of two years of consultation where "Departmental Personnel addressed over 200 briefs and attended more than 100 meetings to hear the views and suggestions of persons interested in Alberta's Child Welfare system" (Alberta, Family and Social Services, Child Welfare In Progress 1986).

Wharf (1993) characterizes the child welfare system across Canada as generally under-funded, in short supply, comprised of inadequately trained staff and under stress resulting in high numbers of placement breakdowns with repeated and damaging moves for many children. These concerns have been highlighted repeatedly throughout this brief review of the history of child welfare in Alberta. In practice, successive governments in Alberta have questioned the role, value and required resources for child welfare. Those involved in the profession would align themselves with the themes stated by Wharf. These themes have also been consistently repeated through the many external commissions and reports, noted above, critical of the child welfare system, with many subsequent attempts by governments to redesign and improve services.

4.4 Contemporary Social Work Research

A number of key themes, trends and issues can be identified from contemporary social work literature. These provide another lens through which to understand the underlying discourse or interpretive scheme used by those working and involved in the field and upon which the discourse associated with the Klein government would have to be layered.

Greater Clarity of Purpose as Central to Child and Family Welfare Services

First, the nature of the professional mission of child and family welfare services has remained contested. In assessing the nature of the work, Callahan and Attridge (1990) describe the characteristics of the work as crucial, complex, fast-paced, risky, solitary, invisible, contradictory and potentially divisive. The idea of role-strain, through contradictions, ambiguity and over-work, is a dominant and consistent theme over time (Littner 1957, Wasserman 1970, Daley 1979, Harrison 1980, Fryer et al. 1988). This inevitably raises the issue of purpose. There is a fundamental question of purpose at the heart of child and family welfare services. The goals of investigation and social control to ensure the poor do not abandon their responsibility to their children, sit side by side with the need to support vulnerable children and families and the commitment to realizing social reform in favour of the poor (Wharf 1993). Any assessment of child welfare must rest on a clear understanding of the purpose of child welfare interventions. As argued by Galaway and Hudson (1995, 368), "a high priority is to reach agreement about the intended outcomes of child welfare services and measures of these outcomes. The fundamental question of what purposes we are trying to achieve with child welfare programs must be answered, along with related questions about the measures to be used in assessing results."

The Issue Of Poverty As Central To Child And Family Welfare Services

The issue of poverty is central to any understanding of child and family welfare services. In 1975, the National Council on Welfare reported that a fundamental characteristic of the child welfare system is that its clients are overwhelmingly drawn from the ranks of Canada's poor. Child welfare has always been a poor people's social service system (Meyer 1985). Wharf (1995, 2) notes that clients of child welfare agencies are "poor, live in substandard housing in unsafe neighbourhoods, and lack control over their lives." In 1988 one major metropolitan child welfare agency reported 83% of the families which it served that year had incomes below the Statistics Canada low-income cut off lines, and that an additional 11% of its clientele was economically vulnerable (Kitchen et al. 1991). More specifically, Wharf notes that in most Canadian province, child welfare is a poor *woman's* social service system. For Wharf, gender is a crucial aspect of the connection between poverty and child welfare. ~~A study in~~ B.C. showed that half the children taken into care in 1988 were from single parent families; 95% of these families had incomes under $20,000, and 72% were in receipt of social assistance (Campbell 1991).

In the late 1980s, Canadian parliamentary committees and politicians began using the term child poverty when discussing poverty and inequality. Baker (1995) argues that using the imagery of impoverished children allowed greater political consensus about the need to reduce income inequality, because the dichotomy between the deserving and undeserving poor still looms large in the public's thinking. Children living in households with low incomes cannot be blamed for their poverty: People cannot argue that they are poor because they are lazy, do not want to work, cheat on their unemployment insurance forms, or defraud the welfare system. The disadvantage of using the term child poverty, from Baker's perspective, is the potential to redirect attention from the real causes of poverty, focusing instead on the symptoms. Such symptoms can be reduced by providing school lunch programs, food banks, enriched after school programs, school social workers, and child oriented school pre-programs, leading us to ignore the underlying problem of family poverty. By way of solution, Baker argues the need of a combination of child centred programs, child benefit and family tax concessions, adequate maternity / parental leave benefits, child care delivery and support systems, effective laws around divorce, child custody and child support, and labour market strategies (job sharing, job creation, education and training).

However framed, it is clear that the issue of poverty for those involved in this field is at the heart of any discussion of child welfare reform. In practice, for Callahan, Lumb, & Wharf (1994), the majority of families are viewed as cases to manage, labelling families as inadequate in parenting and budgeting skills, or as emotionally crippled. Clearly some issues facing families are personal and must be dealt with on a personal level. A National Research / Policy Symposium on Child Welfare held in Alberta in May 1994 built on this 'personal' dimension in arguing that Child Welfare was fundamentally about competence building (Galaway and Hudson 1995). It identified a number of key themes: the need to empower and strengthen families; the importance of building and strengthening communities and support networks; and the need to move practices and policy toward empowerment and competence building. An alternative view sees families as "harassed parents doing their best to cope under difficult circumstances with very limited access to support and resources" (Hern 1994, 2). This raises the need to distinguish between individual problems and systemic issues of public concern.

From a systemic perspective, not only do Canada and the United States have higher rates of poverty among families with dependent children than do most European countries, but a higher percentage of poor families in North America experience longer spells of poverty, (Baker 1995, 67-122). These comparative data would suggest that it is possible to develop social programs to reduce the extent of child and family poverty, and to help impoverished families to move quickly out of poverty. However, the cross-national alternatives are not widely known, and / or are not politically acceptable in all countries, and / or are difficult to implement because of government structure or existing social programs. For many, it is a fundamental child welfare task to draw attention to these systemic issues at the legislative, administrative, judicial and professional levels for the purpose of redress (Baker 1995, Garbarino 1995).

Cultural Diversity as Central to Child and Family Welfare Services

Another key issue or theme has been the lack of cultural sensitivity in the delivery of services to the mosaic of ethnic and racial groups residing in Canada. In recent years, attention has specifically focused on the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children within the child welfare system (McKenzie and Hudson 1985, Johnson 1983).

Quality and Adequacy of Services

An historical overview of services in Alberta (Thompson 1989) repeatedly raises issues of both the quality and quantity of services to meet the needs of children and families. In particular, the substitute or in-care child welfare system is characterized as under-funded, in short supply, inadequately trained and under stress, resulting in high numbers of placement breakdowns with repeated and damaging moves for many children (Wharf 1993).

Service Co-ordination or Integration as Central to Child and Family Welfare Services

The multitude of problems that face the typical child welfare client and the narrowness of the boundaries of child welfare agencies, result in clients requiring services from a number of agencies. Wharf (1995) notes that this has led to pressure to integrate services. In Canada the search for coordination has taken many forms: local service teams, service protocols, multi service centres, and the folding together of previously separate agencies.

Earlier Intervention

Resources across child welfare are used predominantly for crisis services that are often critiqued with regard to their effectiveness and cost. Since the 1960s, arguments have been made for the value of intervening earlier as a more effective and less expensive way to deliver services. Notwithstanding arguments made in favour of earlier intervention, delivery systems across North America and the United Kingdom have not been able to move significantly beyond a crisis orientation (Kamerman and Kahn 1990, Child Welfare League of America 1994).

Community Empowerment as Central to Child and Family Welfare Services

The first seventy years of social service provision saw a trend toward centralization, the past twenty years towards decentralization (Thompson 1989). Cameron (1995) and Fuchs (1995) argue the importance of families belonging to a community and the important role of social networks in providing emotional support. Both argue that local residents should be participants, planners and managers of community services, including activities to strengthen and improve the environment. Their work underscores the point that attention needs to be given to working to support and strengthen social support networks and less with doing treatment. Lafrance (1995) supports this position, noting that much of the literature on social work encourages the involvement of communities and citizens in the development and delivery of human service programs while noting also an underlying ambivalence, due to the nature of bureaucracies, the approach used in the training of professionals, and, at the system level, difficulties experienced in attempting to reconcile the conflicting values, assumptions and priorities of horizontal and vertical systems.

4.5 A 'Social Work' Discourse

I argue this analysis is representative of the interpretive scheme those social workers involved in the field brought to the redesign process. The various lenses on social work present observable, recurrent issues and themes that, when taken together, represent the underlying institutional social work discourse (Heracleous and Hendry 2000). The elements link together to provide a shared meaning (Smicich 1983) and common identity for social workers (Evered 1983). What underlying discourse emerges from this brief review of the philosophical, legal, historical and research underpinnings of social work practice?

First, I think it is fair to characterize social work as arising from and remaining rooted in a belief in the need to support and advocate for the most vulnerable in society. However, it is a profession that advocates for government intervention in support of vulnerable children and families, but also finds itself conflicted by this intervention in its subsequent role as an instrument of social control. As a discourse it is conflicted: It is in part radical or revolutionary in intent, and in part conformist and supportive of the status quo. As expressed by Carniol (1995), a more radical appraisal of social work is as a tool used by the dominant capitalist system to gloss over the very inequalities it creates in the first place. The structural conditions enacted by the dominant system are seen as subversive of the principles, management, and practice of social work by their roots in the dynamics of colonialism, gender, racism, and economic class. From this perspective, much of what occurs in social work is an oppressive practice to clients who are poor and dispossessed from social workers coming predominantly from the middle classes and educated to be professionals. This places many individual social workers in a conflicted role: As employees of government expected to support and enable its agenda, and as professionals encouraged to break out of their oppressive roles in support of social justice. Notwithstanding the conflicted elements of its discourse, the basic orientation of the profession places the majority of social workers within at least an institutional perspective, but in some cases a more radical social development perspective. This is in contrast and contention with the residual approach to social policy adopted by the Klein government.

In the research literature, vulnerability is seen as substantially linked to issues of poverty. The focus of much of the social work literature is that while recognizing the role of personal choice and behaviour, there is a need to mitigate the conditions that result in poverty. This integrates the personal and political aspects of social problems and their remedies; it allows for individual responsibility and action, but recognizes the systemic causes of unemployment, poverty, and basic inequalities. The discourse argues that both must be addressed if successful change is to be realized.

The social work discourse characterizes the sector as inadequately funded, inadequately resourced, inadequately trained and supported. Social workers are presented in the discourse as having low morale, as being overworked and as burning out, resulting in high turnover. There is also a sense of powerlessness and frustration. Most social workers have and continue to be women in the Canadian context. This is perceived as having had its effects on the status, organization and control of the work. These are issues that are longstanding as seen from the historical overview presented above.

The redesign of services is introduced into a discourse that minimally argues the need to improve the quality and adequacy of services, but in its more radical iteration calls for fundamental systemic changes in how resources and power are distributed. Improvement is characterized as requiring more resources, improved service coordination, a greater focus on prevention and early intervention, and a grass roots approach to increased community empowerment in planning and managing services.

This community involvement is seen as an antidote to government and bureaucratic control and management of services. This latter demand is situated in the context of the increasing lack of confidence in government to provide adequate policy and the perceived lack of responsiveness of government to address the perceived problems noted above. It arises from an advocacy perspective that sees the need for more resources and support, the need for systemic societal change and a need to reduce government control over services.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have set out a basic road map to understand the institutional context provided by social work to the research setting. More importantly for my exploration of the attempted redesign of children's services, I have explored the key themes associated with the social work discourse that underlie the service elements. This discourse points to a strong motivation from social work to see change. Ongoing questions of purpose and the need to discuss power, ferment an orientation to ongoing change. The systemic and individual resolution of poverty are seen as important elements in the reduction of the need for child and family welfare services. Services are seen as needing to be more responsive to cultural diversity. Earlier intervention and improved coordination are presented as needed building blocks for improvement. There is a fundamental question, repeatedly posed by the literature, about the adequacy and quantity of services. These themes provide a change agenda for those who practice social work.

The social work discourse will be later compared and contrasted with the agenda brought by the Klein government and interpreted through the Ministry of Children's Services and the Office of the Commissioner. At this point, a simple contrast can be made between the government and the social work profession. The government developed its services as a safety net based on a residual approach to child and family welfare. I have made the argument that this interpretive scheme is different from that adopted by social workers, which is better characterized as an institutional or social development approach. The intent of the change process was to restructure Child and Family Service Authorities to be more effective. The key themes, trends and issues identified provide a potential set of indicators to assess whether increased effectiveness was achieved. However, these very themes, trends and issues, understood within the broader context of social policy, also provide the kernels of a potential disagreement and sources of confusion with regard to what changes should be achieved, depending on perspective and ideology.

I will now turn to exploring the discourse brought to the redesign by the Klein government.

CHAPTER 5

THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OF THE KLEIN GOVERNMENT: A GOVERNMENT THAT MUST DO MORE WITH LESS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I show how the Alberta Progressive Conservative government, under the leadership of Premier Ralph Klein, undertook a program of radical organizational change across government, providing the context for the redesign of child and family services. Its agenda was far-reaching, fundamental change to the values, orientation, structure and systems of government. Collectively, it was an initiative that has become commonly known as the 'Klein revolution.'

Using the analytic framework set out earlier, I explore the ongoing evaluation and interaction between the Klein government and specific environmental elements that shaped its change agenda. Through an analysis of key scripts in the form of annual business and budget plans, published speeches, and news releases I move from the surface level of communicative action to the underlying discursive structures that shaped the Klein government's agenda (Heracleuous and Hendry 2000). First, I analyze the environment that confronted the Klein government at its inception in 1993. I do this from two perspectives: I begin by considering the more immediate political environment in Alberta prior to the 1993 provincial elections as an impetus for change. Then, I consider the influence of the broader institutional context, provided by other governments and contemporary thinking on the role of government, as an influence on the specific agenda adopted by the Klein government. I argue that the Klein government's understanding of its environment is not an objective reality it simply encountered and to which it responded, as the government's rhetoric would have the electorate believe, but rather that it is the product of an interaction between the environment and the government's underlying discourse that filters in and filters out different environmental signals (Pettigrew 1985, Child 1997). Second, I look at the inner context of the Klein government by considering how the government acted on its interpretation of its environment, clarify its motivation for change and how its change agenda was enabled by both its power and management capacity.

5.2 Outer Context: Fiscal Crisis And A Lack Of Public Confidence

In this section I make the case that the Klein government recognized the need to affect radical change if it was to remain in power. In developing its strategies to affect change, the Klein government consciously adopted an NPM approach from the broader institutional context of public sector reform. I show that this model fit well with its ideological interests and its immediate challenge of securing reelection.

The Impetus for Radical Organizational Change: the Perceived Failure of the Getty Government 1985-1993

Don Getty had become Premier in October 1985. He appeared to bring no strong ideological agenda for public sector reform. However, he was to face financial pressures that would drive his government to undertake change. As described by Taft (1997), one year into his mandate in August 1986, oil was as low as $10 (US) per barrel, down from a high of over $40 (US) per barrel in 1981. The Alberta government's oil and gas revenues fell from $6 billion (CDN) in 1985 to $2.7 billion (CDN) in 1987. In response, by early 1987, the Getty government had undertaken a number of actions to reduce spending: Doctors' fees had been frozen, as had spending on education; plans were announced to cut the civil service by 2000 positions; capital project spending was cut by 14%; and welfare rates were reduced for single, employable persons from $420 per month to $326 per month. While the cuts eased off in advance of the election in 1989, the general pattern of reduced spending continued throughout the two terms. McMillan and Warrack (1995) argue that during the Getty era, per capita government spending fell by 15% when adjusted for inflation. Treasurer Dick Johnston underscores this point, arguing that adjusting for inflation and population growth, expenditures should have been $14.3 billion in 1991, but was only $11.5 billion. In effect, "the government's expenditure management has saved $2.8 billion in program spending" (Alberta, Hansard April 4 1991). Notwithstanding the government's attempts to demonstrate prudent fiscal management, as I document below, the credibility of government was in tatters.

As early as 1988, the Getty government was already in trouble. The government's primary problems came from a series of large provincial investments in businesses made in pursuit of economic diversification. Several had failed to make the anticipated revenues, leaving the government liable for hundreds of millions of dollars. The strongest criticism came over a regulatory failure. The collapse of the Principal Group, a trust and financial institution, cost Albertans several hundred million in lost pension investments. The further loss of over $600 million of provincial investment in NovAtel, a cellular phone company, appeared as sheer incompetence by the government. Getty was perceived as out of touch, playing golf while the province crumbled around him (Lisac 1995, 30). The electorate expressed disappointment, impatience and anger at the perceived ineffectiveness of the government. The Progressive Conservative government appeared likely to be annihilated in the next election. Don Getty announced his resignation on September 8, 1992.

In early December, Ralph Klein succeeded Don Getty as both the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and the Premier of the Alberta government. Polls showed the party 15% behind the front-running Liberals. The Liberal party presented as a government-in-waiting, emphasizing both the incompetence of the Getty government and a pending fiscal crisis dramatically portrayed by its use of a 'provincial debt clock' during the election campaign. Klein's task was obvious: to get re-elected he had to reverse the perception of government mismanagement, misspending and waste (Dabbs 1995). There was clearly an electoral impetus for radical change, but what potential alternatives were available to the Klein government? In response the Klein government adopted key ideas and themes from the New Public Management agenda that had evolved and developed elsewhere during the previous fifteen years, starting with the Thatcher government in the United Kingdom.

New Public Management

Campbell (1983) notes that when Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister of Great Britain in May 1979, virtually all governments in the major Western democracies were under stress. Aucoin (1985) reflects a similar perspective, noting that by the late 1970s, the politics and management of restraint in government had become the order of the day. He argues that Thatcher responded to her reading of a changing environment by setting out to reform three aspects of British governance. First, the power of the civil service was to be reduced to become more responsive to political direction. Second, private sector management practices were to be introduced to affect economy and efficiency in government operations. Third, the power and role of the individual was to be enhanced to counter the dominance of state control over the design and delivery of public service. The pursuit of these goals during the next decade resulted in the introduction of what Christopher Hood (1996) calls "new public management."

Aucoin (1995) argues that at first the revolution launched by Thatcher in 1979 was viewed as little more than the logical extension of her particular neo-conservative policy agenda. However, over the coming decade, the new public management would become an international phenomenon, whose logic was accepted by governments across the political spectrum, as they faced economic difficulties and diminishing public confidence. Concerns for economy and efficiency became a priority; enhancing cost-consciousness, doing more with less, utilizing private sector practices and achieving value for money became key objectives of a finance-centred driven perspective on public management reform. Simultaneously, there were increasing demands for direct democracy measures such as referendums, increased participation in policy-making, and greater accountability and open government.

In the face of these potentially conflicting pressures, the reform of government continued throughout the 1980s, not only in the UK, but also in the United States under Reagan, Bush and ultimately the Clinton administrations, and in New Zealand as popularized by the finance minister Roger Douglas. In Canada, before his victory on May 22, 1979, Joe Clark, leading the Progressive Conservative Party, sounded to be very much in agreement with the tenets of Margaret Thatcher, with his own calls for stopping the aggrandizement of the bureaucracy and a proposed 20% cut to the public service (Campbell 1983). However, his government was too short-lived to achieve any significant reforms, and a more moderate interpretation of new public management philosophy came with the return of Trudeau in 1980 and his paradigm of rational management (Aucoin 1986). It would be with the return of the conservatives under Brain Mulroney in 1984 that the stage would be set for a more vigorous, if often purely rhetorical, interpretation. Aucoin (1995, 12), notes that "Mulroney's attacks on government generally, and the public service in particular obviously struck a responsive chord; four years of international attention to Thatcherism, coupled with the rise of neo-conservatism and extensive government and bureaucracy bashing south of the border in two successive American presidential elections, had more than conditioned the Canadian polity to these new forces." However, by the defeat of the Mulroney government two mandates later in 1993, the practical success of public sector reforms was questionable. A 1993 study of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, noted that the reforms in the other three Westminster systems had had a "more strategic focus and greater coherence and consistency" than the reforms in Canada. While not critiquing the principles of the attempted reform, the study noted the need for sustained leadership from the "centre" if they were to be operationally successful (Canada, Report of the Auditor General of Canada 1993, 175-178). This comment underscores the perceived need for strong central, top-down management to tackle effectively the perceived financial problems. It also points to the critical role of ministers in managing the affairs of the state, securing strategic direction and control, and affecting economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the management of operations.

These ideas fit with the conservative ideology of the Progressive Conservative party in Alberta. They also provided effective rhetoric for a government that had to overcome a perception of its incompetent management of the province's finances. Dabbs (1995) and Lisac (1995) both offer some insight into a government searching for ideas. Dabbs (1995) argues that three books played a role in framing Klein's election strategy in 1993: the *Tyranny of the Status Quo* (1984) coauthored by Milton and Rose Friedman, *Reinventing Government* (1992) by Osborne and Gaebler, and to a lesser degree *Unfinished Business* by the former New Zealand finance minister Roger Douglas (Dabbs 1995). Two of the books are tactical. The book by the Friedmans, neo-conservative thinkers influential from the late 1970s, advocates that radical changes must be made in the early months of any new government's mandate. According to Dabbs (1995, 109), the book was given out "by the carton" by Jim Gray, the cofounder of Canadian Hunter Exploration and Klein supporter .The second, by Douglas, shows how he used the perceived need for simple spending cuts to reorganize government. Douglas was in Alberta at the time of the election as part of a high profile Canadian book tour and met with the Progressive Conservative Party. Finally, Gray, along with cabinet ministers Dick Johnston and Elaine McCoy, were instrumental in circulating Orborne and Gaebler's book (Dabbs 1995,110). Osborne and Gaebler, as reviewed earlier, discuss the 'what' of public sector reform for a government that must do more with less. Lisac (1995) notes that Gaebler made more than a dozen trips to Alberta to talk to business groups or civil servants around the 1993-1994 period.

In this section, I have characterized the environment as comprised of both a sense of fiscal crisis and a shrinking public confidence in the Progressive Conservative government. I have built the case that the Klein government's motivation and interest in radical organizational change, was a need to differentiate itself dramatically from the previous Getty government— a government painted as fiscally incompetent by the opposition Liberal party—in order to get reelected. The fact that a fiscal agenda based on reduced expenditures was already very much in evidence pushed the Klein government to a more extreme platform of fiscal management than might have otherwise been the case or necessary. I have shown that Klein's government had access to the ideas of NPM. These ideas fit ideologically with Klein's beliefs and offered a rhetoric that would help differentiate the Klein and Getty leaderships. This provides the basis for the so-called Klein revolution. The next step is to examine and analyze the evidence of how the Klein government interpreted and implemented these ideas.

5.3 The Government's Underlying Discourse: A Fiscally Conservative Government, A Listening Government And A Socially Conservative Government

I now want to turn to how the Klein government interpreted and communicated these ideas in its shaping of government values, strategies, structures and systems. In developing my argument, I have primarily used the government's annual budget documents from 1993-2000 as key texts expressing the position or perspective of government and the basis for its action. My goal is to uncover the persistent structures of the Klein government's discourse that transcend individual texts, speakers or authors. These discursive structures pervaded the government's communication as a whole and over the long term. Using this data, I make the case that the Klein government's primary and continued focus was the fiscal management of expenditures. I argue this fiscal agenda fits well with NPM and a centralized, top-down approach to governance, but not with an empowered community governance structure. I go on to show how this fiscal agenda was rhetorically framed as based on listening to Albertans, but in practice was selective and carefully managed. Finally, while acknowledging some innovate initiatives, I argue the Klein government's social policy orientation was conservative and residual (Armitage 1993). In later chapters, I will analyze how these ideas played themselves out in the context of the redesign of children's services and, in places, were contrary to the direction taken by the redesign process.

Prescriptions for Action (1) A Better "Managed" Government

As described by Dabbs (1995) and Lisac (1995), Klein set out to promote his government as one that would live within its means, end deficit financing and pay off its debts. Immediately after his election as leader of the party in December 1992, he reduced the size of cabinet from twenty six to seventeen ministers, he dismissed sixteen ministers, and wiped out the Ministry of Technology that had overseen the NovAtel fiasco. Within a few days he announced that he would attack and control the province's deficit, not by increasing taxes, but by cutting spending. There would be no provincial sales tax and no liquidation of the Alberta Heritage Fund (the latter being a fund established from the abundant oil revenues of the late 1970s to help offset future rainy days for the province when oil prices might dip). The Klein government worked through December and January to develop a financial plan that would retire about $14 billion in debt and $7.2 billion in unfunded pension liabilities and school board debt over four or five years. The move to include the latter as part of the debt load was criticized by Cooper and Neu (1995) as simply a crass political attempt to make the debt and deficit issue look more worrying to the average Albertan. They argue that this move undermined the capacity for reasonable debate on the severity of the fiscal situation facing Albertans. Nonetheless, the Klein government's stated priorities were to service the debt, make annual payments on the principal and then use the balance of its remaining revenues for programs and services.

Early in 1993, Jim Dinning, the Provincial Treasurer, revised the deficit upwards by some $400 million more than the forecast of the previous autumn. Dabbs (1995) argues that based on this information the cuts started immediately, even before the planned May budget. Ministerial and subsequently staff salaries were reduced by 5%; 1,800 civil servants were laid off. At the end of January, Dinning created a nine member, $350,000 independent Alberta Financial Review Commission of business leaders, with George Cornish as its executive director. Its goal was to open the government's books for two months, then issue a report on the state of Alberta's finances that would form the basis of budget planning. The Commission reported ahead of its March deadline, warning that the indebtedness was worse than expected. The previously reported net assets of $12 billion had melted away to a net debt of $5 billion in only seven years. The per capita net debt of more than $1,000 dollars was the highest of any province and only slightly behind the federal level of about $1,250. The report also put a price tag on the past economic diversification: Some $1.2 billion had been lost on loans and guarantees to business and a further $12 billion was invested in businesses considered to be at high risk of failure. Unfunded pensions represented another open-ended liability of at least $6 billion. The Commission concluded that Alberta would inevitably hit a fiscal brick wall.

Not everyone agreed with this interpretation (Harrison and Laxer 1995). A number of opposition politicians, public servants, journalists and academics expressed concern about the Klein's government's analysis and the emerging prescriptions. However, this difference of opinion is not central to my argument. My concern is the not the correctness of the Klein government's analysis and prescriptions for change, but the institutional context they provided for the redesign. Critical to my analysis is setting out the government's understanding and strategic direction, to be later compared and contrasted with the analysis and prescriptions provided through the redesign process. The aim is to show how the two interacted in shaping the eventual failed outcome of the attempted radical change process.

The spring budget included spending cuts of $700 million, a 22% cut in the first year of a four-year deficit elimination program, and no new taxes. With supporting quotes from the Alberta Financial Review Commission, the Treasurer concluded, "the seriousness of our financial situation requires more than minor adjustments to programs. We must begin thinking differently about how government works. We need to rethink not just what government does, but what government is" (Alberta, Budget 1993, 8). The stated goal was to be "a prosperous Alberta with open, accountable government that lives within the taxpayers'" means and delivers "quality services at low cost" (Ibid, 9). A legislated and enforceable plan to balance the budget by 1996-1997 was passed on May 14, 1993.

All areas of government were cut. An overall reduction of 20% in program spending by 1996-1997 was called for in the budget. It initially stated that this would be 5.5% in the first year, but increased it to 7.7% in the fall budget update.

In addition to presenting the cuts as necessary, it was also initially emphasized that the cuts would not remove funds from those who needed them, but from administrative and bureaucratic systems that soaked up money unproductively. No detailed evidence was presented in support of this proposition. The argument was premised on the assumption of an oversized public service, over-regulation and the intuitive logic that reducing the number of school boards and health authorities would inevitably reduce administrative costs and thereby save money. In education, administrative funds would be cut so that funds could get to the classroom. In health care, funds would be reorganized into community-based delivery systems with less administrative and regulatory waste. This point should be remembered, as I will later argue it was only natural that the government would assume similar savings would be realized through the proposed redesign of child and family services. This is underscored by an early reference to the redesign being linked to the elimination of waste. In the 1993 Budget Update, under a section titled *Eliminating Duplication and Waste*, a reference is made to improving the delivery of services to children through a series of pilot projects across five Alberta communities (Alberta, Budget Update 1993). More generally, across government, a combination of voluntary retirement incentives and direct staff cuts, plus a reduced payroll when liquor stores and registries for land and automobiles were privatized, reduced the civil service by 15% to affect the desired savings.

Health, education and social services accounted for 70% of program expenditures and, as argued by government, could not be spared if a balanced budget was to be achieved. Specific to social services, the Ministry was to receive a net decrease of $156 million previously enacted by the Getty government. The social services minister, Mike Cardinal, reduced the monthly allowance for single, able-bodied welfare recipients and saved $150 million when some 25,000 clients or 28% of those receiving welfare services dropped off the rolls. To stimulate the business environment, a minimum wage of $5 an hour was established. Children's services received a $5 million reduction in funding to contracted agencies for 1993-1994 and were included in an additional $5 million reduction in departmental administrative expenditures (Alberta, Budget 1993: Update, 88).

In spite of some vocal opposition, Klein called and convincingly won the election on June 15, 1993 based on this fiscal agenda. On January 17, 1994, Klein made what subsequently was to become an annual address on the CFRN television network to the people of Alberta. Using the analogy of a family budget, he explained the deficit and debt situation faced by the province. He argued against the need for increasing taxes as short-sighted, unoriginal and as a disincentive to attract business and investment to the province. The answer to Alberta's problem, the "only logical option left," was to reduce spending. Now, in the first year of a new mandate, he argued that more dramatic cuts were required. Further cuts to administration would not solve the problem, as "administrative costs make up less than 10%" of the annual budget, a total restructuring of government was required (Alberta, Premier's Annual Televised Address 1994).

He announced that over the coming three years he planned to impose an average 16% cut on the biggest four items in the budget – advanced education, education, health and social services. The targets would be 12.4% for school boards and 14.2% for higher education; 18.3% for social services and health would lose 17.6%. All other departments would face an average of 30% reductions.

The promised administrative restructuring of education and health was now spelled out. School boards would be consolidated into 60 from 140 across the province and would no longer be able to tax. The government wanted a single, province-wide union contract with the Alberta Teachers' Association. In addition, hospital administration would be consolidated into 17 boards, eliminating the 183 boards then in place. Finally, welfare assistance would be restructured from a passive system of maintenance, to proactive financing of education and training to get people off social assistance.

On February 24, 1994, Jim Dinning brought down *Budget '94: Securing Alberta's Future*. In the budget document it is argued, "Albertans have had an unprecedented opportunity to help shape government policy" (Alberta, Budget 1994, 8). The result was to be significant change to Alberta over the coming few years:

> The role of government in people's lives will be smaller. Albertans will have a stronger voice on how and where their tax dollars are spent. The province will have a government that lives with the taxpayers means. The province will be well managed and free from unnecessary bureaucracy. A financially sound less intrusive government will give

> Albertans greater opportunity to create wealth and jobs (Alberta, Budget 1994, 8).

For 1994-1995, he announced a further reduction in the deficit of 37%, cutting the consolidated deficit by $918 million, $200 million more than expected, giving the province a surplus of $212 million in fiscal year 1996-1997. This was better than the break-even target of the Deficit Elimination Act.

In the highlights for Family and Social Services, the focus continued to be on reshaping the welfare system. In addition, daycare operating allowances and administrative fees were to be reduced, cutting overall spending on daycares by $5.3 million for 1994-1995.

Accompanying the budget document were the promised three-year business plans for 1994-95 to 1996-97 in a publication titled *A Better Way: A Plan for Securing Alberta's Future* (Alberta, Business Plans 1994). The introduction confidently states that Albertans had told the government that they wanted streamlined government operations and more efficient and more effective services to the public at a lower cost to taxpayers. They wanted their government to get its house in order. The document acknowledges the novelty of using business plans and the potential for improvements over the coming years; nevertheless, the plans are presented as detailing goals, strategies and actions to be taken over the coming three years within pre-set spending targets.

Notwithstanding some ongoing vocal opposition, an Angus Reid poll in April 1994 (Dabbs 1995,122) showed that Klein had 57% support, up ten points from his standing just before the election. By November 1994 he had an approval rating of 60%. In a November, 1994 speech to the National Citizens' Coalition, a politically conservative advocacy organization, Klein emphasized that there would be no "sacred cows" as he dealt with the deficit and debt problem, stating that " those who consume the lion's share of the money must assume the lion's share of the solution; if that means health education and social services, then so be it" (Campbell 1994). He further said that politicians should stop pandering to special interest groups and extolled the silent majority. The opposition became labeled as the 'Mush'—the municipal, university, school and public health care professionals and interests—including elected officials, unions, managers and executives whose status was destroyed. Klein attacked the attackers as members of a hostile establishment, who were protecting their privileged lives at the expense of taxpayers.

It was into this environment that the proposed changes to child and family services were introduced in November 1994. There can be little doubt, given the contextual data that I have presented, that the redesign of children and family services would have been understood by government as premised on fiscal saving. I will later show the redesign of child and family services was framed exactly this way by the senior public servants involved in initiating it.

Klein's January address of 1995 built on the themes set out in the pre-election budget of May 1993 and continued throughout the first eighteen months of the government's mandate—to promote Alberta's new economic strategy that builds an economic environment conducive to wealth creation and job generation. A month later, Provincial Treasurer Jim Dinning tabled his third budget, with a $110 million surplus for 1994-1995, a result of unexpected revenues of $1.5 billion based on a strengthening resource sector, a generally strengthening economy, and higher than expected lottery revenue. However, the Treasurer argued that due to the volatility of oil and gas prices Albertans could not allow themselves to be lulled into a false sense of security and to relax their resolve to eliminate overspending. He argued more cuts would be needed to build a strong foundation based on 'four pillars:' balanced budgets, business plans, performance measurement and debt retirement. Based on what he described as prudent revenue estimates, he predicted a deficit of $506 million for the coming fiscal year, 1995-1996.

In the budget document (Alberta, Budget 1995, 11-13), the Treasurer contrasts expenditure levels in 1992-93 with those forecast for 1997-98. The Treasurer notes that spending in areas outside of basic and advanced education, health and social services would, by then, have declined by 27%, Education by 5.6%, Advanced Education by 15.3%, Health by 17.7%, and Family and Social Services by 19.1%. The document also notes that the "objective of maintaining quality with reduced resources" (Ibid, 13) had been greatly assisted by the 5% roll back for public sector staff, combined with a two-year wage freeze.

The Budget also states that the "government's fiscal plan is about more than just reducing spending to sustainable levels. It is about changing the way government does business – setting clear priorities and objectives and focusing on results." The change was framed as "providing new challenges and opportunities in the public sector," with employees being asked to help "find more affordable and effective ways to provide essential services to Albertans" (Ibid, 13-14).

From 1993 to 1995, the number of welfare cases had been reduced by 40%. The budget now framed these cuts as "allowing a reallocation of resources to high-risk children and disabled Albertans" (Ibid, 34). Specifically, spending on child welfare was now expected to increase "by nearly 20% over the coming three years" (Ibid, 34). This increase, as will be noted later, was targeted at early intervention programs.

As with the previous year, the budget was accompanied by business plans, *A Better Way II: A Blueprint for Building Alberta's Future 1995/6-1997/8* (Alberta, Business Plans 1995). The document reflects on 1994 as a year of change, with the fiscal agenda front and centre in the actions of government, as it made progress on its two primary agendas: "balancing the budget and major structural changes across the public sector" (Ibid, 3). Spending had been cut by over $1.4 billion. The structural changes were aimed at changing "the way government does business – to review all processes and ways of operating, to abandon old ideas and approaches that no longer are effective, and to explore new and innovative ways of getting the job done" (Ibid, 12). Key themes were identified as eliminating waste, duplication, and unnecessary regulation while improving productivity; to move from direct service delivery to facilitating services delivered by other agencies though increasing opportunity for private sector delivery. The overall goal was to provide the "highest possible quality programs at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers" (Ibid, 12).

Agenda '96, the 1996 Budget document, continued the same themes as the previous budget with its title of *Balance-Responsibility-Opportunity* (Alberta, Budget 1996). The premier's televised address on January 29, 1996 emphasized the need to continue to budget conservatively and to attack the province's debt; but with a year to an election, he also talked of consolidating, assessing and fine-tuning the major changes that had occurred, with the consideration of reinvestment. It would be a matter of finding the balance, between paying down the debt, reducing taxes or improving programs. For Family and Social Services, the 1996 forecast expenditures were expected to be 10.2% of total government spending, down from 11.9% in 1993. By far the largest part of this reduction is accounted for by reductions in welfare expenditures, but the underlying idea of cost reduction across the whole Ministry remains constant. For the Ministry the vision was stated as continually striving "to improve the quality of services and the results experienced by clients, while reducing the overall costs of operation" (Ibid, 226).

Building Alberta Together (Alberta, Budget 1997) again reiterated earlier themes as did the following year's budget *Agenda for Opportunity* (Alberta, Budget 1998). Of interest in this budget, however, was the emphasis placed on "putting children first" (Ibid, 12). The budget stated that the Alberta Growth Summit had identified people development as the number one priority facing the province. Over the three year plan set out in the budget, the Treasurer promised that spending would increase by $550 million for the key 'people' ministries of Education, Advanced Education and Career Development, and Family and Social Services. It noted, "investment in children and youth is the core of this year's reinvestment plan" (Ibid, 12). Spending on Family and Social Services was targeted to increase annually by about 2% over the coming three years. The Child and Family Service Authorities (CFSAs) were close to being appointed. In support of the Authorities, a Child and Family Services Secretariat was announced to support the CFSAs and to facilitate interdepartmental initiatives for children on behalf of the ministries of Education, Health, Justice, Family and Social Services and Community Development. The secretariat was to report to a Minister Without Portfolio Responsible for Children's Services.

With the publication of the 1999 budget, *The Right Balance*, the primary focus of the government was stated as striking the right balance in six key areas: fiscal responsibility, Alberta's economy, health, people, education and the environment (Alberta, Budget 1999). The fiscal strategy is framed in the context of an uncertain outlook for the world economy, with low oil prices continuing to be a concern. Revenue had fallen by $1.2 billion in 1998-1999 and was not expected to recover significantly in 1999-2000. The document again reflected 'people development,' referencing back to the 1997 Growth Summit. The document notes that 18 Regional

Authorities had been appointed and the government was also able to report on a number of initiatives launched through the Alberta Children's Initiative. These initiatives included "action to combat fetal alcohol syndrome, improve children's mental health services, tackle child prostitution, and reduce income taxes for low income working families" (Ibid, 6). A new Children's Ministry was established comprising the Office of the Children's Advocate, the Child and Family Services Authorities, Family and Community Support Services, the Youth Secretariat and the Department of Children's Services. Welfare had been moved into a new Ministry of Human Resource and Development.

With the next budget, titled *A New Century. Bold Plans* (Alberta, Budget 2000), the government again emphasized fiscal responsibility along with innovation, equity and balance, but the priority list had changed for the coming three years, and children's services were not mentioned. With the end of the three-year commitment to putting children first, the children's agenda had now moved off the government's priority list.

In 2001, with another election behind them and a slowing world economy, the Klein government again asserted its fiscal agenda in the fall. Across the board cuts of 1% were applied to all Ministries, along with delays in a range of capital spending projects announced throughout the election campaign.

In this section I have used the Premier's Annual Address and the Province's Annual Budgets as key 'scripts' of the government (Barley and Tolbert 1997) that set out the government's surface communication at particular points in time, but that together show the government's underlying discursive structure or interpretive scheme (Heracleous and Hendry 2000). The Klein government's interpretive scheme provides the institutional context (Greenwood and Hinings 1996) in which the redesign of children's services took place, and can be contrasted with the competing social work institutional context presented in the previous chapter. I have shown the Klein government as one that kept its fiscal agenda front and centre as it pursued first balancing the budget and then paying down the provincial debt through major structural changes across the public sector. These structural changes were described as "changing the way government does business," a review of all "processes and ways of operating, to abandon old ideas and approaches that no longer are effective, and to explore new and innovative ways of getting the job done'' (Alberta, A Better Way II 1995,12).

The government's governance rhetoric was clearly couched in the language of private sector management practice. A repeated goal was to ensure that the province was 'well managed' by building on the 'four pillars' of balanced budgets, business plans, performance measurement and debt retirement. The government emphasized improved management based on using private sector practices, though loosely adapted and presented, to manage better the 'business' of government. The government introduced business planning in 1994 and, while the overall quality of the business plans may warrant some critique, they were embedded into government practice throughout the period under study. Where possible, it considered and acted on privatization, as in the case of liquor stores and vehicle registries. It undertook restructuring to achieve perceived administrative efficiencies in health and education. This created a context that was clearly open to the use of alternative service delivery models and specifically the model adapted for services to children and families. However, I would argue that the data suggests any such models would be ultimately evaluated not only, or even primarily, against their ability to improve quality and results, but by their ability to reduce or at least contain costs.

Prescriptions for Action (2) A Government That Listens

As argued earlier, along with fiscal challenges, a range of governments faced an additional political problem as to their effectiveness as "successful" problem solving institutions. There was a growing demand for greater public participation in the process of government. This ambivalence about the ability of government to work was not new to Alberta. Murphy (1995) notes that only four parties have governed Alberta: the Liberals (1905-1921), the United Farmers of Alberta (1921-1935), the Social Credit (1935-1971), and the Conservatives (since 1971). In the cases of the United Farmers of Alberta and Social Credit, the electorate not only wanted to change governments, but also the system of government itself. This included the method of electing, controlling and holding responsible governments. Each wave of revolt brought into office a new party, intent on replacing the party system (understood as the domination of the legislature by the cabinet) with a more democratic system where sovereignty was to be returned to the people, who were to retain it by working through instructed delegates. Macpherson (1962) notes that in practice this radicalism, sooner or later, always gave way to political orthodoxy; however, it remains a constant background theme to Alberta politics, as shown by its re-emergence with the birth of the Reform Party in Alberta.

Dabbs (1995) suggests that Klein himself also believes in 'the people' and distrusts 'the government.' He argues that Klein believes governments are at their best when they constrain themselves, leave no damaging imprint on the lives of people and do not displace family, church or community. However, beyond any personal inclinations held by Klein, I have argued that there was also an immediate political incentive for the government to present itself as close to the people. Both Dabbs (1995) and Lisac (1995) argue the previous Getty government had been seen as increasingly out of touch with the people of Alberta. In the face of almost certain electoral defeat, they suggest there was a renewed political imperative for the Klein government to show itself to be listening and in touch with Albertans. Certainly the data I will present shows the Klein government consistently presented itself as a government that listened to Albertans and that its priorities are firmly based on their input (Alberta, Premier's Annual Televised Address January 1994).

I argue that the broader context, Klein's personal beliefs, and the immediate political environment all acted to support initiatives that showed the government to be listening to, and being led by, the people of Alberta. A 'community governance' model, such as that proposed for the redesign of child and family services, would, therefore, appear an attractive idea at an ideological or rhetorical level. However, I also noted earlier that the role of community governance models within Westminster models of government, particularly a government pursuing a top-down fiscal agenda based on the mandate of its electoral majority, is not a simple fit at a practical level (Langford, 1997). Understanding what a 'government that listens' means in the context of the Alberta government is clearly important to understanding a restructuring initiative that introduced community governance and the potential influence of that governance model.

In the television address of January 17, 1994 (Alberta, Premier's Annual Televised Address 1994), Klein emphasized the need to consult Albertans throughout the speech. The Premier stated that his "greatest responsibility is to listen to [Albertans]." The phrase 'you told us' is repeated several times and reference is made to a series of public forums that had been held the previous fall. In summary, Klein presented a "government that cares about you, listens to you and consults with you to make sure that your priorities are the government's priorities—not the other way round." The premier acknowledged that the government expected "the public forums would result in different opinions," noting that "this is a healthy process," but calls for "rational and informed discussion," noting his frustration of seeing "people misunderstand the severity of our financial situation, and question our motives for dealing with it." As noted earlier, Budget 1994 reiterated these themes, telling Albertans that they had had an unprecedented opportunity to help shape government policy.

In practice, the Klein government regularly used provincial forums as a means of demonstrating to Albertans that they were listening. These started with the "round table" discussions in the first year of his mandate in 1994-1995, and continued with the Alberta Growth Summit in 1997 and the Future Summit in 2002. In addition, there have been a number of provincial questionnaires and a range of Ministry level public consultations of various issues (for example: the use of future surpluses, the taskforce on children at risk, the children's forums, and the welfare rates consultation).

Key questions that might be asked of any consultation process are what questions are posed, whose voices are heard and what action results. With the initial round table discussions, the fiscal policy direction taken by government was a given, and as such they were premised on listening to Albertans on how to make government successful with less money. First, was the budget round table in March 1993; the health and education round tables came later in the year. Several senior business executives—such as Eric Newell from Syncrude; Ken McCready from Trans-Alta; Norm Wagner of the Natural Gas Company; Art Smith from SNC Partec; Hal Wyatt from the Royal Bank; Gordon Barefoot from Ernst and Young; Mel Gray of Resman Oil and Gas; Sherrold Moore from Amoco Canada Petroleum; and John Ballheim of the DeVry Institute—played key roles in the roundtables and the reviews of business plans and the financial review committee. Lisac (1995) describes the round tables as highly managed affairs. Officials and cabinet ministers controlled invitation lists, as well as the agendas and the information booklets normally sent out to participants. The participants were always split into smaller workshop groups. No votes were ever taken or record kept of who was promoting what. Where the round tables resulted in criticism, as in a couple of the ten regional health consultations chaired by the then Minister Mirosh and Norm Wagner, the Minister was reported as saying, "I've found in both Edmonton and Calgary that the unions are well organized to come forward and put forward their opinions" (Lisac 1995, 156). These were characterized as special interest groups and not the voice of the silent majority.

Whether the government really represents what the assumed 'silent majority' wants remains contested. In practice, the government was seen by some critics as pandering to a "special interest" group in the form of the corporate elite. Harrison (1995) notes how the Lougheed conservatives developed strong business partnerships with the oil and gas industries. He argues that the increasing power of the oil interests, the blurring of government business relations throughout the Lougheed / Getty governments, led to what he describes as a "corporatist" government that is essentially anti-political and pro-business. Supporting this corporatist perspective, Dabbs (1995) and Lisac (1995) also point to this corporatist agenda continuing under the Klein government through the strong involvement of the province's corporate elite in shaping and then supporting the Klein agenda. For Lisac (1995), this indicated a government that would continue to run in partnership with business. Supporting Klein was what Dabbs calls the 'Klein Gang,' a group of approximately 80 Calgarians, who were some of the most powerful and wealthy in the Calgary establishment, a group who had a great deal to gain from the success of fiscal reform in terms of reduced corporate and personal taxes, and lower minimum wages than in other provinces.

The success of these initiatives, measured against their inclusiveness and willingness to listen to sectors of Albertans who may disagree with the government's agenda, might therefore be reasonably challenged. Lisac (1995) critiques the round table discussion processes that created a "mythic voice of Alberta – a united – one dimensional Alberta" (Lisac 1995, 145). There is no debate on direction. The answer to Alberta's problem, the "only logical option left," was to reduce spending (Alberta, Premier's Annual Televised Address 1994). Opposition or disagreement with this agenda is characterized by government as the views of "special interests" standing to lose from the change needed to benefit the majority of Albertans (Harrison and Laxer 1995).

In summary, I have shown that the context of a 'listening' government taking direction from Albertans has deep roots within the history of Alberta politics. I have also pointed to the more immediate pre-election circumstances of a Getty government as an impetus to emphasize listening. However, the data shows a government that appeared to listen to only a segment of the population. Their agenda was presented as a given and there is evidence showing the strong influence of a corporate elite shaping that agenda. Listening was subsequently a highly managed and selective process.

This, I would argue, is nothing unusual in the context of Westminster models of government. The key for any government, under this model, is to secure an electoral majority. The government secured a majority based on a clear fiscal agenda and then engaged its supporters in implementing that agenda, with opposition dismissed as 'special interest' groups. I would conclude it is reasonable to assume that as long as a community governance model for child and family services supported this fiscal agenda, an agenda premised on the ability to improve quality and results while also reducing costs, the fit with government would remain strong. However, what if the governance model argued the need to increase costs to improve quality and results, or critiqued the fiscal agenda as damaging to the well-being of a significant sector of Albertan children and families? I will explore this in later chapters, but the answer can be predicted in part based on the data presented above and in part based on an understanding of the government's stance on social policy.

Prescriptions for Action (3) A Residual Approach to Social Policy

In the 1994-5 budget highlights for Family and Social Services, emphasis is given to providing services to those individuals and families 'most in need' (Alberta, Budget 1994). This indicates at the outset an underlying 'residual' approach to social policy as described in the previous chapter (Armitage 1993). Accompanying the budget document were the promised three-year business plans for 1994-95 to 1996-97 titled *A Better Way: A Plan for Securing Alberta's Future* (Alberta, Business Plan 1994). *A Better Way* sets out five core businesses for government:

1. Investing in people and ideas;
2. Building a strong, sustainable and prosperous province;
3. Providing essential services for the health and well-being of Albertans;
4. Maintaining a quality system of roads and highways, telecommunications and utilities; and
5. Providing law, order and good government.

Health and Child and Family Services fall under the third core business. The goals for these services are threefold: (1) To encourage and support Albertans to become healthy, self reliant and productive; (2) to keep families responsible and accountable, adults independent and children safe; and (3) to promote, maintain and improve the health of Albertans. These goals can again be characterized as residual. As noted earlier, this approach does not deny the need of social services; in fact, the document references that child welfare will remain a priority for the government. Also, it commits to affordable and quality day care, prevention and protection for abused women and responsive services to persons with disabilities (Alberta, Business Plans 1994, 7-10). However, the expected results talk of "Alberta providing a social safety net that assists those most in need, while continuing to support people's efforts to achieve greater independence," with individuals and families being responsible to meet their basic needs and for the safety and security of their children (Ibid, 9).

The residual tone was again stated the following year in *A Better Way II: A Blueprint for Building Alberta's Future 1995/6-1997/8* (Alberta, Business Plans 1995). In this document, the five core businesses of the previous year had been revised down to three: "people…prosperity… and preservation" (Ibid, 4). Along with Education, Health, Advanced Education and Career Development, Family and Social Services was placed under *People* with its goal of "helping people to be self-reliant, capable and caring" (Ibid, 4). It offered the promise of "basic support and protection for those in need," in the context of "supportive families and compassionate communities" (Ibid, 4) while remaining committed to "keep children safe" (Ibid, 6). The result was to be that Alberta would "provide a social safety net for those most in need, while continuing to support people's efforts to achieve greater independence" (Ibid, 7). The budget document makes clear that individuals and families were responsible for meeting their basic needs, and responsible for the safety and security of their children. The government, however, continued to recognize its responsibility to provide "responsive and accessible care" for children and families in need of protection (Ibid, 7).

Building Alberta Together (Alberta, Budget 1997, 13) again reiterated the earlier theme of "basic support and protection for those in need," as did the following year's budget *Agenda for Opportunity* (Alberta, Budget 1998). However, of note in this budget was a promise of "reinvesting in people – a focus on children" (Ibid, 34). The impetus appeared to be both increasing budget surpluses and pressure from the Alberta Growth Summit that had identified people-development as the number one priority facing the province. Over the three year plan for 1998-2001, the Treasurer promised spending would increase by $550 million for the key 'people' ministries of Education, Advanced Education and Career Development, and Family and Social Services. Spending on Family and Social Services was targeted to increase annually by about 2% over the coming three years. As noted earlier, the government established the Child and Family Services Secretariat to support the operationalization of the CFSAs and facilitate interdepartmental initiatives for children. The increase in funding was directed to this secretariat through an initiative called the *Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda for Joint Action.*

On the face of it, 1998 marked a shift, at least rhetorically, as the government emphasized children's issues and initiated a range of innovative programs across various ministries through the *Alberta Children's Initiative*. I shall question the motivation for this in the next chapter; however, at this point in developing my argument I simply want to note the strong residual approach to social services in evidence between 1993-1998, with a shift in rhetoric to wards children noted for the business plans set out for 1998-2001.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how the Klein government's agenda reflected the strategic themes used by other governments over the previous decade. It was, first and foremost, a fiscal message of a " government that must do more with less" (Osborne and Gaebler 1992). I have argued that the Klein government's motivation for change was pragmatically driven by the need to win an election in the face of almost certain defeat. This was inextricably linked to a platform of cutting costs premised on listening to 'Albertans.' That noted, the literature critiquing the Klein government also points to ideological motives for radical change, a change to the way government does its 'business' driven by the respective neo-conservative and neo-liberal wings of the Klein caucus (Denis 1995, Harison 1995, Laxer 1995, Lisac 1995, Murphy 1995). The official government documents presented above support this interpretation. They show a strong desire for smaller and less intrusive government, premised on the need to cut costs. This approach inevitably underpins what I have presented as the government's fundamentally 'residual' approach to child and family services (Barnhorst 1986, Armitage 1993).

While it is difficult to assess management capacity from the data reviewed, what can be clearly noted is the power of the Klein government to affect a top-down strategy of cost-cutting in the first three years of its first mandate. As noted earlier, the Westminster systems of government, found primarily in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, are particularly well suited to this type of action (Aucoin 1995). At least two features of the Westminster systems appear to promote the successful adoption of new public management. First, in comparison with United States, with its system of divided government and checks and balances to power, prime ministers and cabinets in Westminster systems have considerable discretion to change the machinery of government and administrative practices, without the need for legislative change. Second, even when this is required, in comparison to parliamentary systems where coalition governments are the norm, with the need to accommodate diverse political perspectives, the governments of these four countries are formed by a single party, that can use their parliamentary majorities to affect change without accommodation. Simply put, these governments have the power to enact a top-down strategy successfully.

This power is very evident in Alberta through the dominance of the Progressive Conservative government over the past two decades. However, the very power that would allow the Klein government to address its perceived financial problem aggressively left the government less able to address the perceived problems of adequate public participation. In a system that has power centralized in a prime minister or premier, individual ministers and a collective cabinet, the delegation required by new public management for senior civil servants or government agencies, let alone meaningful participation from a variety of political perspectives, provides a significant challenge. These same conditions are mirrored in the governance model in Alberta and perhaps even exaggerated through the dominance of the governing party. In practice, Klein skilfully managed to portray his government's strongly centralized approach to managing government as being responsive to and premised on its consultation with the people of Alberta.

The task at hand is to assess how this institutional interpretive scheme impacted the redesign of children's services. From the perspective of the Provincial Budget documents, the reorganization of services to children and families was consistently framed within the government's broader fiscal agenda. This agenda was rhetorically committed to improving quality and results, but intent on doing so while reducing costs.

CHAPTER 6

THE MINISTRY OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES: IMPROVED RESULTS AND REDUCED COSTS THROUGH RADICAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

6.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, I set out the agenda and underlying discursive structure of the Klein government. As set in my analytical framework (figure 3.1), the broader government provides the critical institutional context for the Ministry. Within the evolving Westminster model of government, the role of a minister and his or her Ministry has increasingly, over the past two decades, been to align themselves with the government's central agenda, managing external demands and critiques while pursuing the government's overall agenda (Campbell 1983, Aucoin 1995). This chapter explores how the Ministry of Alberta Family and Social Services managed this process as it attempted to pursue the broader government agenda with various external demands and criticisms. A key thrust was an attempt to change radically child and family services.

I start the chapter by considering both the broader environment and more immediate institutional context in which the Ministry operated (see Figure 3.1). It faced contradictory demands for reduced expenditures from the government institutional context—and more resources to meet the needs of children and families from the environmental context. In particular, I build on the themes arising from the institutional social work context set out in an earlier chapter by showing how the discourse from this context interacted with the Ministry through several coalitions associated with the change process (Child 1997). I move onto to consider the response of the Ministry to make radical improvements to services while dealing with these contradictory demands (Wilson 1989). The attempted reform is looked at from three perspectives. First, the ideological and rhetorical framing of the redesign initiative looks at how the Ministry discourse attempted to reconcile the differing institutional discourses of social work and the Klein government (Heracleous and Hendry 2000). Second, I set out to show how both the immediate institutional context of government and the broader environmental context interacted to shape the redesign process (Greenwood and Hinings 1996, Barley and Tolbert 1997). Third, I conclude this section by considering the capacity of the Ministry to realize change by looking at the Ministry's human resources, finances, motivation, and power to achieve such radical change (Greenwood and Hinings 1996).

6.2 Context: Fiscal Conservatism Versus Demands For More Resources

I established the underlying discourse of the Klein government in the previous chapter as essentially focusing on a fiscally conservative agenda, underscored by a residual approach to social policy, and premised on the government being perceived as listening to Albertans. This need not be elaborated any further, except to emphasize the importance of this institutional context in providing overall direction for the minister and Ministry (Greenwood and Hinings 1996). The task of the minister and Ministry is to support this discourse while politically stick handling stakeholders and the broader citizenry either in support of the discourse or to at least minimize their impact if opposed (Wilson 1989). In my analytical model (Figure 3.1), I identified several coalitions (Child 1997) within the broader environment, who became actors in shaping the content and outcome of the redesign of child and family services. I will show how their collective discourse both reflects and builds on the discourse associated with the institutional context of social work. In effect, these coalitions collectively form an alternative and competing discourse to that provided by the Klein government.

First and foremost was the Office of the Children's Advocate. This was initially achieved through a critical 1993 report, *In Need of Protection* (Alberta, Child Welfare Review 1993), by the first provincial Children's Advocate, Bernd Walter and then subsequently reinforced through the ongoing impact of a series of critical Annual Reports from the Office of the Children's Advocate. Second was the impact of the official opposition parties, in particular the Liberal opposition who played a sustained role in critiquing the redesign of children's services. Third, the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE) provided an early critique of the process and was later influential in stopping the government from fully delegating services to the new regional structure. Finally, the provincial news media and one or two other external stakeholders provided an additional level of scrutiny and criticism that shaped the outcome of the redesign. I will now sequentially examine their critiques.

6.2.1 The Office of the Children's Advocate: Impetus for Radical Organizational Change?

The Getty government had introduced the role of the Children's Advocate on September 1, 1989. In doing so, it established the concept of advocacy on behalf of children as an integral, legitimate and distinct component of Alberta's Child Welfare System (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 1990). Alberta's child welfare system, like those of other Canadian jurisdictions, had until this point consisted of two essential functions: (1) the provision of care, supervision and custody of children who are in need of protective custody; and (2) the review of administrative decision making carried out by judicial and quasi-judicial systems in the form of the Courts and the Child Welfare Appeals Panel. The goal of the new advocacy system was to ensure that decision-makers appropriately considered the particular child's needs, interests and viewpoints for "even the best intentioned front line social worker will ultimately experience a conflict of interest as he or she approaches systemic limitations or barriers to his / her capacity to effectively advocate for a child" (Ibid, 5). However, there was another function that would have a significant impact on the direction of child and family services in the province of Alberta. An additional role of the Advocate's Office was to provide information and advice with respect to "any aspect of services to children including practice, procedure, policy, organization, funding, management or legislation" to children receiving services pursuant to the Child Welfare Act (Ibid, 20). In effect, the government had established an independent critic who had access to the internal workings of child welfare system.

Through legislation, the Children's Advocate is appointed for a fixed term of five years by the government. Two of the three advocates have left the position early through disagreement with government policy; none of the three Advocates who have held the post have lasted five years; and all of the Advocates have been critical of the systemic ability of the Ministry to meet its mandate. The role and critique is interesting in that, while it is considered a part of the Ministry, it is essentially separated by its ability to publish an independent annual report addressing its work on individual advocacy, but also noting what it considers to be systemic issues or problems. It has access to more information than any external critic and more independence to voice concern than any internal critic. In this regard, its reports offer a unique insight into the functioning and capability of the Ministry to fulfill its mandate. The publication of its report and its presentation to the legislature is one of the few times child and family services is publicly debated each year.

Carrying Their Words (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 1990) was the first report of the Children's Advocate covering the period from September 1989-1990. It both introduced and set out the parameters of the Children's Advocate's office. In the Advocate's second report (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 1991), four systemic issues were identified. First, the Advocate questioned the availability and quality of placement resources for children in care due to budget restraint and commitments to reducing institutional care in favour of community based care. Second, he argued that services to adolescents were ineffective and in need of rethinking. Third, he identified a number of systemic barriers to timely planning and decision making, (including legislative issues, policy, resource issues, the need to consult bands with respect to First Nation children, and inadequate monitoring of progress) that had a negative impact on meeting the "best interests" of children. Finally, he argued that youth participation in case specific and system level issues was inadequate.

The specifics of the report are less important than its overall critical tone. It is worth noting the similarity of issues to those noted earlier when I reviewed the broader social work context in chapter four. Most importantly, less than a year after its release in February 1992, Minister John Oldring directed the Children's Advocate, Bernd Walter, to undertake a "comprehensive review of the operation and implementation of Alberta's Child Welfare System and legislation, and to develop and present recommendations for broad systemic change" (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 1992, 3). For me, the request for a review is somewhat surprising: The Ministry at the time was still in the process of implementing changes brought about by new child welfare legislation implemented in 1985. In his eventual report, *In Need of Protection*, the Advocate acknowledges this fact, but argues, the "relationships between the Child Welfare System, its clients, external service providers and the broader community appear strained. There is a perception that the system is closed to external input or scrutiny" (Alberta, Children's Advocate Child Welfare Review 1993, 4). In addition, "it is becoming difficult to access protective services," such that the issues he raised in his last report, "continue to represent significant concerns in 1991-92" (Ibid). I suggest that these issues present a case for incremental, rather than radical, organizational change considering how recently the new Child Welfare Act had been introduced. Nevertheless, they appear to have been adequate for the Minister to sanction the need for the review.

In Need of Protection: the Argument for Radical Change

Whatever the motivation or reason for the report, the Children's Advocate released *In Need of Protection* in mid-1993. It was a wide-ranging review running to over three hundred pages. The Advocate argued that within the current organizational structure, political considerations and demands directed a major amount of energy away from program delivery. In effect, he contrasted the best interest of children, as stated in legislation, with political interest; stating that the more demanding and more influential of these was political interest. Political interest appeared to be referring to the fiscal restraints exerted by the Getty government, which he implied had led to caseload reduction and inadequate support to children in need of protective services (Ibid, 4).

In the report, the Children's Advocate tried to shelter child protection from such political exigencies by counterbalancing the power of government and a centralized bureaucracy with a recommendation for community based and owned services. He asserted that no amount of reorganizing the Department would result in an effective child protection system, because the organizational model was fundamentally flawed and required radical change toward a decentralized organizational model. Citing public health, education and preventative social services as examples of other human services already operating under a decentralized model, the Advocate argued that Child Welfare in Alberta must be radically and comprehensively reorganized and transformed. In his proposed model, while central government would retain policy setting, funding, standards development and monitoring functions; it would be empowered communities that would be better able to address social problems at a local level. Communities themselves would determine how to organize and coordinate access to their services. The Advocate believed that this would likely result in a variety of different approaches because of the diversity of needs and resources in each community. The Advocate concluded that while not offering a panacea to the problems faced by child and family services, such change would enhance the responsiveness, effectiveness, an increase the capacity of the system to generate innovation, morale, commitment and productivity.

In analyzing the report's conclusion, while no reference is made to their work, many of its propositions are similar to those put forward by Osborne and Gaebler (1992). For example, the Advocate characterizes the Ministry as a large, bureaucratic, centrally-driven organization, offering only standardized services and therefore unable to respond effectively to the unique circumstances of communities throughout Alberta. This is similar to Osborne and Gaebler's suggestion that while bureaucratic institutions may still work well in circumstances where the environment is stable, the task simple, and every customer wants the same service; this is not the case in social services that require more flexibility and innovation. Like Osborne and Gaebler, the Advocate argues that provincial and state governments are poorly suited to meet local service needs; he suggests that centralized authorities lack the flexibility and presence to be effective providers of community services. More specifically, they are not responsive to client needs, they alienate service users and they are totally subject to political and managerial control. I have no evidence whether the Advocate had read Osborne and Gaebler (1992), but the similarity is nonetheless close and fits with the evidence presented earlier that their ideas were circulating the Alberta government in 1993. Though circumstantial, this may suggest that he couched his own recommendations using their language in an attempt to move government in his desired direction. This is difficult to prove in any conclusive way; however, it has been my experience of government that policy writers often try to move forward their policy arguments by couching their ideas in a conceptual framework palatable to the government of the day. This is an important sub-plot to my thesis, building as it does on Pettigrew's (1985) arguments that the dominant organizational discourse structures the character of the political process and debate inside the organization. In effect, those wishing to realize change within organizations must mobilize support for that change by using the dominant ideological structure at a given point in time or they must have the ability to change the dominant ideological structure through modifications or replacement. However, the danger in choosing the first strategy is that such rhetorical framing can mask a direction that fundamentally does not fit with the organizational or institutional context and therefore fails to bring about change due to resistance from the context. I will later argue that this proved to be the case in the redesign of child and family services.

In terms of the recommendations, beyond referencing the use of community boards in other sectors, the Advocate offers no other detailed description or analysis as to their effectiveness or comparability to child and family services. This highlights Pollit's (1998) analysis of NPM as ideology, rhetoric and practice. No substantive business case is made for the radical change process; however, based on a superficial analysis, he asked the Minister to commit to yet another comprehensive reform of child and family services. This proposed change is initiated by rhetoric, rather than substantive analysis. This is supportive of Pettigrew's (1985) findings that the initiation of radical organizational change is not simply the consequence of rational problem solving using business practices, but rather the control and management of meaning, the ability to interpret events in support of a course of action. In this instance, an institutional actor was able to mobilize a radical redesign process with limited critical analysis as to why a redesign was required and to propose a direction with equally limited critical analysis of its fit or feasibility. In effect, the Advocate used the content of a public consultation that stated the need for change and couched his recommendations in the rhetoric of fashionable contemporary public sector reform literature that would find current political favour to successfully initiate a major reform program.

The Advocate argued that his proposed redesign would result in a move toward community governance and a clear delineation of community and provincial responsibilities. Its scope would include the decentralization of Child Welfare, Children's Mental Health, and the Young Offender Services. His preferred model would be to structure child and family services within the school system under the Department of Education, although he acknowledges other possibilities. He believed implementation of the new service delivery system should be no later than April 1, 1996 and to implement the vision the Advocate proposed establishing an independent management structure for three years, under the title of Child Youth and Family Services Implementation Branch.

It is in citing the education system that the Advocate provides the clearest insight into his vision for child and family services. With its elected school boards in counterbalance with central government, it offers a level of critique and public debate around service and funding issues that was totally absent from the child welfare organization. He proposed a community governance structure, clearly separate from central government, capable of critiquing and offering a counterbalance to political exigencies in the interest of children. This was and is a radical critique of representative government. It is in essence closer to the discourse of increasing skepticism and growing demands for public participation in central governance operations (Kanji 1999) than it is to the direction taken by Osborne and Gaebler (1993), which keeps the government in a steering role and the community simply rowing.

While never mentioned in subsequent government documents reviewed for this dissertation, the Advocate's (Alberta, Children's Advocate Child Welfare Review 1993) critique was the seminal impetus for the redesign that would follow. The redesign took place over several years and other contextual factors would come into play and influence the redesign over that time period. However, the Advocate's key ideas became the grist of the redesign process. I will shortly return to show how the Advocate's ideas were subsequently modified through the redesign. At this point, I want to set out the ongoing critique of children's services that the Office of the Children's Advocate would continue to communicate publicly throughout the redesign process.

The Annual Report: Criticism from the Children's Advocate 1994-2001

A textual analysis of the Advocate's reports reveals an underlying structural discourse that has been consistent since its inception in 1989, and at times exasperated, in pointing to the inadequacy of resources to meet the mandated service needs of children and families. I have noted the earlier reports above and will now turn to those reports published after *In need of Protection*. In 1993-4, as the redesign got underway, the Klein government was acting on its commitment to reduce spending and balance the budget. Some of the operational issues arising from the cuts are reflected in the annual report of John Lafrance, the new Children's Advocate. The issues for the Advocate were basically the same as those identified by his predecessor Bernd Walter: lack of appropriate placement resources (especially for children experiencing mental health problems, brain damage, mental handicap or Fetal Alcohol Syndrome); social worker / child relationships; inadequacy and lack of treatment services especially in the area of mental health and treatment for perpetrators, transitional services to youth leaving care after the age of eighteen; and the ability to adequately plan for the long term care of children. However, the Advocate argued that these services were now being further restricted or cut because of budget limitations imposed by the Klein government's fiscal agenda (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 1994).

The same issues are repeated in the 1994-5 report (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 1995): insufficient appropriate placements available for children who are unable to reside with their families; a hesitance and sometimes reluctance to assist youth in need; and young adults 'abandoned' by the system that has been their guardian when they attain adult status. The Advocate again argued that the delivery system claims financial restraint dictates the need to refuse or terminate services and that Children's Advocates and youth are frequently told that budget restrictions prevent the authorization of services for children, but that this is officially denied.

The 1995 / 96 report (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 1996) noted additional pressures on the Ministry due to increasing child welfare caseloads, particularly in the Edmonton, Calgary and Central regions. It stated that provincial caseloads grew 13% from November 1994-June 1995. The Advocate reported waiting lists as the volume of referrals exceeded the staff resources available and that the criteria for protection interventions had become more stringent in some parts of the province. While the Advocate states that Senior Department staff assured him that they had access to adequate resources, he notes that at the front end of Child Welfare they had repeatedly heard from Child Welfare workers and supervisors that services were limited due to fiscal constraints. A range of service concerns, similar to those noted in earlier reports, were again highlighted.

In this report, Lafrance, echoing Bernd Walter, argued that while recognizing a number of challenges, the creation of community based steering committees to lead the redesign process generated a powerful force with the potential to enhance significantly and to change positively services to children and families. This support for the redesign continued in the1996-7 report (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 1997), when he described a bureaucratic welfare system, isolated and defensive of community involvement. However, he also raised significant concerns about the existing service platform from which the redesign was being built. He described the major constraints facing the Child Welfare system as fiscal limitations to meet their existing mandate, a chronic lack of foster homes, shifting ideological positions with regard to family preservation and the protection of children, and a public whose attitude can range from apathy to outright hostility.

In this report, the Advocate also criticized the government's welfare reform policy, describing it as too rigid in insisting the community's most vulnerable families—single parents with young children—seek gainful employment no matter what their circumstances. For him such a policy lacked fiscal sense, let alone compassion. He noted that he has intervened in situations where families, who were no longer able to provide the basic necessities of life for their children, were threatened with having to relinquish them to Child Welfare. He strongly advocated that no family should be threatened with the loss of their children because they cannot feed them.

This critique is framed within the broader context of what he describes as the cumulative effect of the fiscal constraint experienced by human service departments, evidenced by a burgeoning child protection workload straining the resources of the existing system. The report described the crisis as existing over the past two years with overworked staff, inadequate resources, and routine overruns of allocated budgets. Critiquing the rhetoric of government over its practice, he concluded that if children really were the future, it was time to examine the impact of decisions made in the last several years as they affected the health, education, financial security and protection of children.

The new Children's Advocate, Bob Rechner, was appointed in September 1997. Rechner took an equally down-beat perspective in his first Annual Report, noting that it picks up where others had left off: "I've come to understand in a new way that many of the issues and deficiencies in the child welfare system are longstanding. It has become a challenge each year for the office to find different ways of essentially saying the same things… many issues remain unresolved and were observed as continuing problems throughout the year – inappropriate placement, lack of permanency planning and action, and reluctance to serve older adolescents" (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 1998, 7-8). The report goes on to restate these issues in terms of previous reports and their ongoing reality. The very same themes were to be restated in the next report (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 1999), where he would also note that child welfare caseloads had again grown for the third successive year, though this time by 8.3%.

The Advocate's growing frustration is reflected in the next annual report (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 2000), and culminating in the release of the 2000-2001 report (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 2001) and his decision to step down early from his position. The Advocate's frustrations spilled over into the media, which described the report as "a damning indictment" (*Edmonton Journal* October 6 2001, section H1). The Advocate was quoted in that article as saying that the government's support for children is given a low priority and that services remain chronically underfunded. By way of emphasis, he noted that the Ministry faced a $39 million deficit, along with a further $6.4 million reduction in funding, imposed as part of a 1% roll back by the Klein government in the face of negative economic indicators.

As a range of reports, across three different Advocates, their perspective and issues have remained remarkably consistent, though consistently contested by the Ministry. The underlying discursive structure consistently presents a picture of a system inadequately funded to meet its mandate and in continual crisis. The reports' issues and concerns are remarkably similar to other independent reports noted earlier in chapter four. In effect, the discourse presented by the Office of the Children's Advocate is both a continuation of and rooted in the social work discourse presented earlier in chapter four. It is also clearly distinct from the Klein government discourse presented in the previous chapter. This now begins to frame my analysis of the redesign process as set out in my analytical framework (Figure 3.1) as organizationally nested in the institutional context of the government discourse, but rooted in the alternative institutional discourse of social work.

6.2.2 The Alberta Liberal Party

The Children's Advocate's critique of child and family services, is echoed and utilized by other groups, including the political opposition in the province, made up of the Liberal and New Democrat Parties, predominantly located in Edmonton. Throughout the redesign process, it was the Liberal opposition that most consistently and actively opposed the direction taken by the Klein government. They framed the redesign as part of the government's fiscal and socially conservative agenda, and an abandonment of the government's accountability to children in need (Alberta, Liberal *Caucus News* 1995). The critique was politically effective when linked to the concerns they expressed about health care and education in the run up to the 1997 election. Through this strategy, the government was painted as uncaring. The government's response was to host the Alberta Growth Summit and the resulting election promises of 'reinvesting in people' with a focus, among others, on the needs of children (Alberta, Budget 1998).

Building on the critique offered by the Children's Advocate in *To Fend For Themselves* (Alberta, Official Opposition June 1997), the Liberals argued that because of under-funding, the system lacked adequate resources and staffing, resulting in a host of other related, more specific problems. They made the case that these problems would sharpen as the government, in their view, cynically off-loaded its responsibility for Alberta's children onto regional health authorities and communities. They also criticized the further privatization of services as turning child welfare into a 'business,' a direction they believed would further exacerbate the difficulties now faced by families and children when they try to access required care (Ibid., 44). In July 1998, The Liberal Party issued a further critique of the redesign initiative, *How Much Do Children Matter?* (Alberta, Official Opposition July 1998). The document offered an analysis of the recently released Accountability Framework (Alberta, Family and Social Services 1998). This document, to be reviewed later, set out how government would ensure they remained accountable for mandated services. The Liberal Party's document identified a number of concerns: the inadequate definition of responsibility and accountability, inadequacy of funding; the inadequacy of provincial standards; and the lack of progress towards integration of services. In summary, it questioned the government's commitment to providing adequate resources for children's services.

6.2.3 The Alberta Union of Public Employees

Throughout the redesign, the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE) was also consistent in opposing the initiative. A key part of the redesign was to be privatization and the use of other alternative service delivery models. This direction presented a significant threat to AUPE membership. During the month prior to the release of the Commissioner's reports in 1994, the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE) published its own policy paper, *Children At Risk: Responding to the Need* (AUPE October 1994). The paper described the redesign initiative as a divestment and privatization that amounted to downloading and abandonment by government of an indispensable moral obligation to children. They argued that the government's scheme to transfer its responsibilities for Child Protection Services to private interests and boards would have the effect of severely impeding or even eliminating crucial services from being delivered to the children and parents who need them most. From AUPE's perspective, the scheme meant an end to universality, an abandonment of accountability and responsibility, and more child abuse and neglect undetected, untreated and unresolved. In contrast to the position taken by the Children's Advocate, they argued that the changes were not based on any identified weaknesses in the current model, but simply based on a purely ideological commitment to downsizing and privatization. In a further briefing titled *A Quick Guide to Mike Cardinal's Plan for Alberta's Children* (AUPE December 1 1994, 1), the union stated that, "at no time were social service workers consulted. No organized approach was made for input to either the staff who presently deliver the programs or to the Union which represents them."

In my review of the redesign I found no evidence of their critique directly impacting the redesign process. I also found no evidence of any formal alliances made with the professional social work association, although their agendas had much in common. Carniol (1995) notes how social workers have used their union membership to oppose cuts to social services in order to provide some level of protection against management power. However, he also notes that many social workers aspire to move into management roles as early as possible due to low pay in non-management roles, and that they remain ambivalent about their union membership or are inactive due to the demands of their jobs and family demands.

In practice, it was an unrelated legal action that challenged the ability of government to move their workers to the private sector without paying severance that had a direct impact. Instead of government employees becoming employees of the new Child and Family Service Authorities, they would eventually only be seconded. I will show later that this would significantly constrain the ability of the Authorities to realize their planned change.

6.2.4 Other Critiques

A range of other groups also offered different types of critique. For example, in June 1996, the Edmonton Social Planning Council dedicated its social issues magazine *First Reading* to the redesign process. In its introduction, the magazine references an underlying issue: "our greatest challenge as we sought out authors was finding people who had an interest and some legitimate involvement, but were also able and willing to write an article that was in any way critical of government. I wonder if we can really consider any community development process legitimate when so many of the most knowledgeable people are afraid to say what they really think for fear of retribution, real or imagined?" (Edmonton Social Planning Council June 1996, 3).

Real or imagined, I recall the fear as real enough across the community. It ranged from a sense that a 'gag order' had been imposed on government employees to a fear across community agencies of being subsequently 'black listed' from future contracts if they were not perceived to be onside with the redesign. This very much fits with Pettigrew's (1985) analysis of the political and cultural dynamics associated with organizational change processes and Boje's (1991, 1995) argument that structures of power relationships within an organization lead to a dominant narrative which de-legitimizes or silences other voices that do not accept or adapt their behaviour and views to the dominant narrative. As a participant observer, I very much experienced a sense that one had to be onside with the change process.

One individual who was not afraid of criticizing the process was Bernd Walter, the former Children's Advocate, author of *In Need of Protection*, and now chair of the B.C. Child and Family Review Board. In an article titled *Perverting Principles* (Edmonton Social Planning Council, *First Reading* June 1996, 12), he challenged the redesign initiative as "doomed to failure," being unclear as a process of "what needs to change." He argued that "government had turned a well intentioned idea to empower communities and vulnerable individuals into a cynical exercise of downloading responsibility for the most vulnerable members of society – all obscured in the rhetoric of vision and principles" (Ibid). Two years later, in April 1998, the Edmonton Social Planning Council released the results of a statistically unrepresentative poll (240 respondents from 1000 questionnaires mailed to Edmonton-area agencies and groups in February and March). Only 16% of respondents felt that the redesign would result in improved services for children whilst 45% disagreed.

Other than the Edmonton Social Planning Council, I found little else in the way of critical analysis. Throughout the redesign, there was occasional coverage from the media in Edmonton and Calgary, some of which included weekend special reports. However, with no dedicated reporters as might be found for business, health or education, the reports were mainly descriptive with little or only superficial analysis.

Nonetheless, the impact of the media on the political process should not be underestimated. Governments track daily media coverage and media coverage of abused and neglected children presents a weak political underbelly that can bring public concern quickly to the fore. I suggest that it is fair to characterize the broader public as aware of child and family services only through the occasional tragedies reported in the media. However, it is here that political sensitivity comes to the forefront. The concern engendered by such reports can be from one of two directions: where the Ministry does not intervene soon enough to help a child in a particular situation or where it intervenes too zealously and is perceived as overriding the rights of parents (Berridge 1997). This explains why only a small amount of criticism would get a political response throughout the redesign, making the task at hand difficult for staff and managers, but more particularly a delicate political issue for any minister and government. The Minister and Ministry are alternatively faced with emotional outrage from the public when children are hurt by abuse or neglect, or a reaction of public fear to a perceived over zealous government bureaucracy taking children away from their parents. The sensitivity was present throughout the redesign process as the Klein government continued to cut public spending and presented itself as less intrusive in its orientation. The vulnerability was underscored by media coverage of the cuts to child and family services in November 2001, when headlines highlighted balancing the provincial budget on the backs of vulnerable children. This sensitivity forms a backdrop to understanding how, in the absence of any significant public scrutiny and debate, a small number of institutional actors might be considered coalitions in influencing the direction of the child and family services redesign. Their ability to have their perspective shared through the media impacts a political process sensitive to polls and approval ratings.

6.2.5 The Role of External Coalitions

In this section, I first underscored the dominance of the institutional context of government and therefore the potential dominance of the Klein government in shaping the change process. I subsequently have described a critique offered by a small number of external stakeholders to the Ministry, whom I have also earlier categorized as coalitions, in that they tried to influence, to varying degrees, the redesign process. Their critique is rooted in the discourse from the institutional context of social work, presented earlier, and premised on the need for more resources. In sheer quantity, the amount of critique is small, especially when compared to the reaction and coverage that was given to health care or educational reform in the province. Nevertheless, I have argued that there was a fair degree of political sensitivity to their critique, given the public's reaction to media reports of abused and neglected children being potentially hurt through government cutbacks. The task for the Ministry would be to manage this critique while remaining responsive to the broader fiscal and social agenda of the Klein government (Wilson 1989). I now want to turn to how the Ministry interpreted and responded to these contextual pressures in its shaping of the values, strategies, structures and systems of the redesign. I intend to show that its response over time was shaped primarily by its need to remain responsive to the government's agenda, limiting the impact of other sources of criticism and eventually undermining the initial intent of the redesign initiative.

6.3 The Vision for Children's Services: Improve Quality And Results While Reducing Overall Cost Through A "Grass Roots" Community Driven Process

At the release of the Advocate's report *In Need of Protection* in June1993, the Klein government had replaced the Getty government on a platform of needed cuts to expenditures and improved management of the 'business' of government premised on listening to Albertans. The Ministry would try to emulate this platform. The Alberta Family and Social Services (AFSS) Annual Report (1993 / 1994) notes that the government had "challenged departments to redefine the business they are in and to reduce expenditures to support the balanced budget initiative"(Alberta, Family and Social Services 1994). A new mission statement was developed, underscoring the residual focus discussed earlier, stating the goal of the Department was to 'keep families responsible and accountable, adults independent, children safe" (Ibid.)

Subsequent to the election, a new minister was appointed. John Oldring, the minister who had commissioned the Advocate's report, has been a leadership opponent of Klein and was dropped from cabinet. The immediate political challenge for the new minister, Mike Cardinal, was to respond to the Advocate's critique and recommendations in a way that fitted with the government's newly stated agenda. In response, the new Minister announced two major initiatives. First, he announced a short-term plan, identifying 33 action steps to improve immediately key areas within the child welfare system (Alberta, Family and Social Services, *Reshaping Child Welfare Services* 1993). Second, he committed to redesigning child welfare services through the coordinated efforts of various departments and communities in pursuit of improved services to children (Alberta, Family and Social Services, *A Redesign of Children's Services* 1993).

Using my analytical framework set out earlier, the redesign can be considered from two perspectives: First, the ideological and rhetorical positioning of the redesign, which was both radical and expansive in its vision for community ownership (Pettigrew 1985, Pollit 1998, Hearacleous and Hendry 2000). Second, the evolution of the redesign as it interacted with both contextual and intra-organizational factors that incrementally constrained and undermined the initial vision (Greenwood and Hinings 1996, Barley and Tolbert 1997).

6.3.1 The Rhetorical Prescription for Action: A Fundamental Reform of Child and Family Services

In 1993, the Minister established the Commission of Services for Children to design and implement a new integrated approach to serving the province's children (Alberta, Family and Social Services Annual Report 1994). The Office of the Commissioner was comprised of the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and a small group of staff linked to what would become six regional offices comprised of a Director and a small number of community facilitators and support staff. Their goal was to facilitate a community consultation process for redesign separate from the existing departmental/regional structure, but with full access to its data resources. I start this section by presenting detailed evidence of what exactly were the intentions and goals of the redesign. Understanding the stated rhetorical intentions and goals of this redesign are critical benchmarks against which to evaluate the accuracy of my argument that the redesign failed, and to track the process the redesign took.

A Commissioner for Children's Services was appointed November 1993 to be in place for 18 months. As Commissioner, Ray Lezanik's task was to find new and innovative ways of organizing supports and services to children by March 1994, design a more efficient and effective community-based model of service delivery by June 1994, and then implement the new structure by June 1995.

The goal was to "decentralize child welfare authority, delegate authority to communities, provide resources to deliver services locally and integrate services with

Table 6.1: The Commissioner's Mandate and Goals

(*On Planning and Implementing: A New Approach to Services for Children and Families* 1994)

Vision

The new, reorganized approach to services for children, will be:

- Effective and efficient
- Affordable
- Based on an integrated service delivery network
- Accessible
- Responsive
- Based on community priorities and needs
- Managed by and delivered within communities

Goals

The goals that have been set by government to achieve this vision include:

For Children:

- Children will be protected from harm
- More children will be born healthy and live healthy, productive lives
- Fewer children and youth will come into conflict with the law
- Children will achieve their optimum level of development

For Families:

- Families will have responsibility and the ability to find their own solutions
- Service strategies will focus on promoting strong, nurturing and self reliant families

For Community:

- Helping children will be everyone's responsibility
- Dependence on services will be replaced by people caring for people within the community.

For the Organization:

- Decentralization of child welfare authority
- Delegation of authority to communities
- Provision of resources for local delivery
- Integration of the services of provincial departments, where possible
- Integration and coordination of efforts at the community level

Tasks

- Identify new and innovative approaches
- Consult with key stakeholders, including aboriginal groups, government departments, the Premier's Council on Families and communities.
- Design a more efficient and effective community based service delivery model.
- Make recommendations for change to the Minister of Family and Social Services.
- Implement the new structure.

other departments where it makes sense to do so" (Ibid.,14). These ideas were further elaborated in *Planning and Implementing a New Approach to Services for Children and Families* (Alberta, Commissioner of Services to Children 1994). As can be seen from the menu of ideas set out in Table 6.1, the reforms were placed within the context of the "reform of government" initiated by the Klein government in 1993. The ideas reflect the NPM agenda: Improved services are defined in terms of effectiveness and innovation. They were to be provided at reduced cost based on improvements to efficiency and affordability in the context of the Klein fiscal agenda. Government was to assume more of a steering role, with services to be managed by and delivered within communities. It argued that the expansion of large human service systems does not lead to greater well-being; rather, it argued, there is a need to build on the strengths of communities, families and individuals. The end-point of the redesign was to focus on results, not activity.

The redesign was premised on a residual approach to social policy, where self-reliant families will have responsibility and the ability to find their own solutions. The Commissioner, ignoring the arguments from the social work discourse, frames the redesign totally within the discourse used by the Klein government. In the document, the Commissioner argued that change was required because of a "growing dissatisfaction with the inability of service systems to adapt and respond to the needs of children and families" (Ibid., 2), suggesting that "over the years, numerous reports have identified the shortcomings of the current approach to addressing the problems of children and families… fundamental reform is required" (Ibid., 4). No mention is made about the adequacy of resources and the struggle of doing more with less (Pollit 1998). Through the redesign process, key questions were to be asked around the 'vision, goals, service philosophy, achieving results, provincial structure, regional authorities, local service delivery and funding' (Ibid., 9).

In November 1994, one year after his appointment, five months later than the original target date, and based on some initial public consultation, the Commissioner of Services brought forward the action plan for new and innovative ways of providing support to children and families. The government (Alberta, News Release November 30 1994) set out a three-year process to "ensure that integrated services for children and families are delivered by the community."

Major themes from the consultation process resulted in four major thrusts to the proposed action plan (Ibid.):

> Community Delivery
>
> The plan proposed that government gradually move out of direct delivery of children's services. Responsibility for managing and delivering services would be delegated to new Local Authorities. Under the plan, the provincial government would then retain responsibility for legislation, policy, standards, funding and evaluation.
>
> Focus on Early Intervention
>
> The plan emphasized early intervention. Early intervention programs would reduce the number of children requiring crisis intervention and government-supported care. The plan recommended a focus on high-risk children.

Aboriginal Services

The plan proposed that the responsibility for planning and delivering services for Aboriginal communities be transferred to Aboriginal organizations including First Nations and Metis Settlements. It also recommended that joint ventures be established among Aboriginal groups, and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups, for the planning and delivery of children's services.

Integrated Services

In order to meet the diverse needs of children, the plan argued that services must be integrated. The plan proposed that children's services become integrated as part of a local service plan. It proposed that government departments and community agencies integrate their planning and resources to achieve common goals for Alberta's children and families. The plan stated that services and agencies must be consolidated, wherever possible, in order to redirect savings to children and families.

The accompanying document *Focus on Children* (Alberta, Commissioner of Children's Services 1994) built and elaborated on these four key strategies. It emphasized, "Albertans had made clear that communities are capable of delivering their own services" (Ibid.,3). "Local authorities," led by a volunteer board consisting of "Albertans from all aspects of community life," would be "responsible for planning and managing all children's services in their areas" (Ibid.). Privatization would be pursued with agencies "to deliver the actual services," with government employees being "assisted and given every opportunity to find new employment opportunities in community services" (Ibid., 10). Government would assume the role of defining key results for children and families and providing overall direction to the process, through developing guiding policy and legislation, and monitoring, evaluation and the provision of funding.

The Commissioner restated the government's commitment to "redirect $50 million to children's services over the next three years" to be used for early intervention programs "to reduce the number of children coming into the Child Welfare, Youth Offenders and Mental Health Systems" (Alberta, Alberta, News Release November 30 1994). "By increasing early intervention programs over the next three years, there will be a significant reduction in the number of children in care in residential facilities, foster homes, correctional centres and group homes" (Alberta, Commissioner of Services for Children, *Focus On Children* 1994,11). The cost-saving in these areas would then be redirected to more early intervention programs, "in the long term, effective early intervention programming will reduce the overall costs of providing children's services" (Ibid.,11).

To re-emphasize, the textual analysis shows the redesign initiative clearly was reframed within the broader policy and fiscal agenda of the government:

> There has been an assumption that more means better… that government should create more programs and provide more services to meet the needs of children and families. The result has been a growing dependence on government when what parents and children need, in the majority of cases, is help in developing their capacity to help themselves (Alberta, Commission of Services to Children *Focus On Children* 1994:3)

The framing of the redesign to fit within the Klein government's discourse can be contrasted with the earlier Advocate's document *In Need of Protection*, the seminal document that initiated the change process. My first observation is that nowhere in any of the Commissioner's 1994 documents (*Planning and Implementing a New Approach to Services for Children and Families*, *Finding a Better Way* and *Focus On Children*) is the Advocate's review mentioned. Any individual reading these documents would not glean that the redesign initiative set out in them was in any way a political response to the earlier report. It is as if the report did not exist and that the redesign is now premised on the Commissioner's understanding of what Albertans have told him over the previous twelve months. As stated earlier, I propose that this can be interpreted through the *instrumental / managerialist* approach proposed by discourse analysis (Heacleous and Hendry 2000), with its emphasis on how discourse can be manipulated by dominant organizational actors to achieve managerially, or in this case politically, relevant outcomes. The need for and direction of change is framed within the context of the 'reform of government' initiated by the Klein government in 1993.

In contrast to the Advocate's report, community is not posited as a check and balance to political considerations; rather, it is a community from an idealized earlier time in Alberta's history, where people are remembered as self-reliant, caring and not dependent on government. This notion of community does not hold the politician's feet to the fire with respect to their responsibility for vulnerable children, rather it assumes a responsibility for children that rightfully belongs with community and not with government. In effect, the Commissioner rhetorically reframes the content of the

Advocate's recommendations to fit with the ideology of the Klein government. The Commissioner (1994) also couches the thrust of his proposals clearly within the NPM rhetoric:

> In recent years…economic realities have drawn to a close the long history of growth in federal and provincial programs… The corporate sector is making dramatic readjustments in order to succeed, indeed to survive, in today's age of rapid change. Economic, political, social and technological changes have created environments bearing little resemblance to those of even a decade ago. In an era of declining resources, organizations in both the public and private sectors have had no choice but to re-examine their objectives and the ways in which they meet them. Observers of the modern organizational experience have been calling for the reinvention, the transformation, the total re-engineering of systems, structures and work processes. They argue against minor modifications or modest efforts in redesign (Alberta, Commissioner of Children's Services *Finding A Better Way* 1994,3)

In this framing, community takes back responsibility because government, at a time of declining resources, can no longer afford to retain it. In taking on that responsibility, community will succeed through improved management of the services, not additional resources. The Commissioner noted "fundamental themes" of this management approach as including: "eliminating waste and duplication; reducing bureaucracy; moving away from the direct delivery of services; and increasing opportunities for private initiative and community-based, not-for-profit agencies" (Ibid., 4). Reflecting Osborne and Gabler's (1993) thesis, he argued that in this changing environment government should focus on its "steering" role (Ibid., 8); "Local Authorities will be established to be responsible for designing and managing all children's services in their area. Agencies should deliver these services based on contracts tendered through an open, competitive process" (Alberta, Commission of Services for Children, *Focus* *on Children* 1994,10). Services must be "customer focused," restrictive rules and controls inhibiting "reinvention and innovation" must be removed, and services should be decentralized and based within "budget limitations" (Ibid.).

However, in analyzing the discourse presented by the Commissioner, I found that the concept of what exactly was meant by "community management" is elusive. In *Finding A Better Way* (Alberta, Commission of Services for Children 1994), the Commissioner wrote that…

> In the past several decades, government has assumed more and more responsibility for "solving" social problems and concerns. In the process, the important roles played by the family and community have been ignored… Many Albertan's call for a reaffirmation of the value of families and communities as the basic support systems in our society (Ibid., 6)

"Community" is defined to include service recipients, family members and concerned citizens who should be involved in "all aspects of planning, decision making, service delivery and monitoring" (Alberta, Commission of Services for Children *Focus On Children* 1994,10). "Community" is able to…

> Understand the problems and issues experienced by local children and families and are able to determine the most appropriate ways of responding to them… (as such) a growing body of opinion contends that government should withdraw completely from the direct delivery of services, but maintain its funding and overall support of community-based services. Many Albertans say government should restrict its activities to developing policy, setting service standards, planning and coordinating initiatives, monitoring results and funding (Alberta, Commission of Services for Children *Finding A Better Way* 1994,6).

Similar to the arguments made by Osborne and Gaebler (1992) for "catalytic government" and "community owned government," a more restricted role for government is equated with the views of "many Albertans." The section goes on to talk about the...

> Contributions of volunteer associations, charities, religious organizations, service clubs... the establishment of community networks of support and ... mutual aid groups (Ibid., 7)

When linked with subsequent comments made immediately after, it gives the distinct impression that community management equates with smaller government and de-professionalization, with more effective services and less expense.

> That government leadership is required more than ever – not only to provide strategic direction and control of public spending, but also to create an environment where the organization and delivery of services build upon, rather than replace, the strengths of the family and community' (Ibid., 7)

This is made somewhat more explicit in *Focus On Children* (Alberta, Commission of Services for Children 1994, 24), where it is asserted that through community management "significant results will be apparent in terms of the effectiveness of services and the overall cost savings."

This section is important to my overall thesis as it shows the role of rhetoric in using ideas and concepts in the service of the dominant organizational discourse (Pettigrew 1985, Hearcleous and Hendry 2000). It reinterprets a concept used in one discourse to fit with a different discourse. "Community" management and control as understood by the Advocate (Alberta Child Welfare Review 1993) and reflective of the broader social work discourse is reinterpreted to fit with the fiscal, socially conservative agenda of the Klein government. My own experience of this as a participant observer was to feel and witness ambivalence. The surface level of communicative action focused on the concept of "community management and ownership," allowing individuals and groups from the two discourses to understand this through their respective underlying discursive structures. This allowed the change process to continue through the early stages with both the government and social work discourses interpreting the meaning to the proposed changes to fit their own perspective.

Across the evolving prescription for change, one is able to see a number of key themes that are carried forward from the Advocate's review, but with a different interpretation. The initial impetus for change was reframed by the Commissioner to better fit with the exigencies of the Klein government's agenda. The position taken by the Advocate might be described as distrustful of the ability or willingness of the political / departmental level of the Ministry to provide effective and quality services to children and families in need due to budget constraints. The framing by the Commissioner is entirely within a government agenda of improved management in partnership with community that will result in quality services that cost less. The *Review of the Child Welfare* Program by Coopers and Lybrand (Alberta, Family and Social Services January1998, 3-7) would underscore this when it described the purpose of the redesign as improving the "quality of service and results while reducing overall cost and to work with community (to develop) an integrated community-based delivery system for services to children and families." However, notwithstanding the reframing of the Advocate's report to better fit the Klein government's ideology, it is important to note that its rhetorical prescription was still for an empowered community owned governance structure fully responsible for designing and managing all children's services in their area. The Commissioner appeared to believe that a community governance structure would in effect be supportive and more effective than the public service in achieving the government's vision of improved services with less money.

His optimism appeared to be premised on the belief that the infusion of $50 million over a three-year period for early intervention programs would reduce the number of children coming into the more expensive out-of-home placements in Child Welfare, Youth Offenders and Mental Health Systems. He argued that cost savings in these areas would then be redirected to more early intervention programs, such that in the long term, effective early intervention programming will reduce the overall costs of providing children's services. In reviewing all the publicly available documents from the Office of the Commissioner, I found no evidence of any business case analysis for this strategy. Both the belief in community as a better 'manager' than the public sector and the adoption of $50 million expenditures on early intervention as an effective stimulus to reduce costs, appear to be based on ideology or hope rather than analysis.

Notwithstanding the lack of analysis, the Commissioner's apparent belief that an empowered community governance structure would achieve improved quality and reduced costs would remain consistent for over two years. In March 1996, a *Précis of the Redesign of Children's Services* initiative (Alberta, Commission of Services for Children 1996, 4-5) continued to reiterate earlier themes: "each community is to create their own vision and gather ideas on what types of services children and families need most." Building on the "four key areas of change" (community delivery, early intervention programs, aboriginal services and integrated services), the process would involve community-working groups developing a plan that "determines vision, goals, outcomes and action plan for the region." The Regional Steering Committees would then take these plans and meld them into a preliminary Regional Service Plan. These plans would be reviewed and approved by the Commissioner and then shaped into a regional 'Service Plan' that builds on the preliminary plan while ensuring "compliance with provincial policy and standards… coordinates children's services between regions and other authorities providing human services… and is within the funding range provided." Once the service plan has been approved for a region, a Children's Services Authority would assume responsibility for developing business plans "outlining the details of how the service plan will be implemented."

As earlier, community management remained front and centre, with no concern that communities would want more money than provided for by the funding. However, this ideological and rhetorical vision would be incrementally constrained and shaped by environmental, institutional and intra-organizational factors.

6.3.2 The Practical Framing of the Redesign Initiative

The 1994 / 95 Ministry Annual Report (Alberta, Family and Social Services 1995, 11) noted the "new direction for Children's Services" that would "occur over a three year period, with Regional Authorities being established as communities are ready to implement service plans." It states that, "government will gradually move out of direct delivery of children's services. Through a community driven, grass roots approach, regional service plans will be developed. They will outline the redesign of children's services to be delivered at a community level." To facilitate the grass roots consultation process, 17 regions were established, with the same boundaries as the Regional Health Authorities, and then community-led 'Steering Committees' were put in place for all 17 planning regions. Although there is congruency between rhetoric and practice in the early stages of the redesign, a divergence developed as operational policy evolved gradually to constrain the initial vision. This constraint was further exacerbated by human resource and financial management issues, as well as issues of organizational capacity.

Here, the "normative embeddedness" of the redesign within its institutional context exerts itself (Greenwood and Hinings 1996). Building on their "configurational" analysis, described earlier, they argue that organizations must accommodate institutional expectations to survive, leading to organizational convergence and an institutional resistance to radical change. The ability to resist this convergence and respond to pressures from the dominant institutional field is seen as a function of the organization's internal or intraorganizational dynamics in terms of interests and values, power dependencies and capacity for action. These conceptual tools from the analytic framework (Figure 3.1) and supporting literature on radical organizational change open up the exploration of the impact of the institutional context assessed against the ability of organizational actors to affect radical organizational change.

The Evolution of Constraining Institutional Policy

The consultation for the redesign was underway by spring 1995. In June, the Office of the Commissioner issued *Handbook 1: Laying the Foundation – a guide for planning children's services in Alberta* (Alberta, Commission of Services for Children 1995). John Lackey had now replaced Ray Lazanik as the Commissioner. Seventeen 'Regional Steering Committees' had been appointed, composed of 14-17 members led by both an Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal co-chairs. Their task was to develop and then submit a Regional Service Plan. Within each region a number of 'working groups' representing either a community of interest or a geographic area were to be established. Building on the four key areas identified through the Commissioner's consultation, the Steering Committees, with community input through "working groups," were to create a vision "of what you want for children and families in your area" (Ibid.,16), assess what is happening now in the community (Ibid.,18) and evaluate "what is working and what's not" (Ibid., 21), expand the original vision in terms of this information (Ibid., 27), then develop a preliminary service plan (Ibid., 26). Steering Committees would then begin the task of reviewing working groups' preliminary plans as they put together a Regional Service Plan. This document is consistent with the initial framing of the redesign. No mention is made of either environmental or intra-organizational constraints.

In the Commissioner of Services for Children's fall newsletter, *Focus on Children's Services* (Alberta, Commission of Children's Services Fall 1995), the Commissioner noted that 120 working groups had been formed across the Province involving more than 1,800 people. In the newsletter, the Minister, Mike Cardinal, again reiterated that government understood the "message we received from the people of Alberta, that their communities are able and willing to design and tailor children's services in ways which best meet their needs"(Ibid.).

Throughout 1995, the government found itself being attacked by both AUPE and the opposition Liberal Party. They argued that the redesign amounted to an abandonment of the government's accountability to children in need (Alberta, Liberal Caucus News 1995). This criticism came at the same time as the Ministry was developing the enabling legislation that would frame the operations of the Child and Family Service Authorities (CFSAs). The resulting Child and Family Services Authorities Act was passed by the Legislative Assembly and received Royal Assent on May 22, 1996. The legislation emphasized that the provincial government remained accountable for services provided for the safety, security and well-being of families. However, it also maintained the direction that CFSAs would assess needs, set priorities, plan, allocate resources, and manage the provision of services to children, families and other community members in the region.

In a release from the Commissioner's Office on the new legislation, *A New Partnership: Albertans Design a Community-based System of Child and Family Services* (Alberta, Commission of Services for Children, undated), the Commissioner stated that under the new legislation, "each authority will have flexibility to set out uniquely-tailored strategies and service-delivery models that respond to the needs of local children, families and communities." At the same time, the release emphasizes that a province-wide set of standards will assure Albertans of appropriate quality and consistency in services across the province." Here, the Commissioner appears indirectly to reflect some of the concerns expressed about the delegation by noting "several safeguards" that were already in place or being developed, including key pieces of legislation with which the authorities must comply: the Child and Family Services Authorities Act, the Child Welfare Act, the Social Care Facilities Licensing Act, Day Care Regulations, the Financial Administration Act, Government Accountability Act, Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act. In addition, the document noted that the province would set provincial standards; require Authorities to submit business plans to the province for approval; develop protocols to govern relationships between authorities; and develop a framework for monitoring and evaluating the Authorities. This is a 'yes… but' argument: yes, CFSAs will have the ability to design and manage services, but be assured we have put in place a whole range of safeguards that ensure they do this appropriately. These elements were certainly present earlier in the redesign process, but in emphasizing them as "safeguards" in the present context the Commissioner is responding to growing external pressure (Child 1997).

Further, the new Act fully underscored the primacy of the Minister in a way that had not been mentioned in the redesign to this date. It would be the Minister who appoints the Authority and who has the ability both to give direction or to dismiss the Authority if the "Minister considers that the Authority is not properly exercising its powers or carrying out its duties under this Act or under an agreement, or if for some other reason the Minister considers it to be in the public interest" (Alberta, Child and Family Services Authorities Act 18(1)). In other words, the Minister is given a broad set of discretionary powers over the Authority, based solely on the Minister's perception of the "public interest." This is not the evolution of a new relationship between government and community governance, but a fundamental restating of the Westminster model of government, with power and accountability firmly embedded in the role of the minister. It reflects the normative embeddedness of the redesign within the institutional context of government (Greenwood and Hinings 1996).

The second planning handbook, *Putting the Plan Together* (Alberta, Commissioner of Services for Children May 1996), was now provided to communities to assist them in the development of their Service Plans. This handbook took further steps to constrain the CFSAs. The handbook notes many of the Regions had now prepared a "preliminary service plan" that set out a "vision of what your communities want for their children and families, goals to bring your vision to life, outcomes that show the results you expect to achieve and an action plan" (Ibid., 1) . However, it also states that "now is a good time—before you get into specific strategy setting—to learn more about the overall framework for the redesign of services to children and families" (Ibid., 25). It notes that there are some "givens" in the redesign process in the form of legislation set out in the Child and Family Services Authorities Act and the Provincial Requirements for Regional Services for Children and Families. In addition, the Steering Committees are encouraged to take into account the evolving "funding model," "existing facility" commitments and 'human resources," while again noting that the "province will work with Authorities to give government workers an opportunity for employment in the new community system, and provide assistance for a smooth transition" (Ibid., 41-42). At this stage, the handbook notes that the review process will "make sure that the plan meets the needs of communities **and** the government" (Ibid., my emphasis).

Simultaneously, another document, *Provincial Requirements for Regional Services for Children and Families* (Alberta, Commissioner of Services for Children May 1996), was distributed to communities. This document outlines the preliminary requirements, roles and responsibilities for government and Child and Family Services Authorities relating to services for children, families and other members of the community. The document directs CFSA Steering Committees to develop their service plans in line with some fifteen principles set out in this document. These included the requirements to plan and manage in compliance with provincial legislation, regulation, policies and standards; contract local service delivery in compliance with set guidelines; comply with the funding provisions; comply with established Regional Protocols; and comply with provincial reporting requirements. In addition, to prepare for the transition to a community based service system, several task forces and committees had been established, ranging from a Deputy Minister inter-Ministry working group, a standards development group, a funding model committee, a technical advisory committee and an inter-regional protocol working group.

As the new fiscal year 1998-1999 commenced, the Ministry issued a number of key documents that would form the basis for establishing the 18 regional authorities. The Provincial Accountability Framework for Child and Family Services set out the components that would "help guide and govern Child and Family Services Authorities." The framework was comprised of a Governance document, Provincial Standards, a Business Planning Guide (Handbook III), a Monitoring and Evaluation System, a Protocols Framework, the Funding Allocation Framework, Statutory Agreements (first to formally transfer responsibility for child and family services to Authorities, secondly a memorandum of understanding around the provision of administrative supports and services, and thirdly a management services agreement to delegate authority to the Authorities to manage provincial government employees), and a list of Provincial Legislation applicable to Authorities.

In effect, the redesign process, while continuing to communicate the role of community governance in setting strategic direction and managing services, embeds the redesign within the institutional context of a Westminster model of government. A year into the implementation a community consultation document, *CFSA Act Consultation* (Alberta, Children's Services 22 September 2000), is much more explicit of this reality when it states that, "the Authority is an agent of the Crown and as such operates as an arm of government. As such they act on the government's authority, subject to the general direction of government. While the CFSAs have a responsibility to their communities in the provision of child and family services, they remain, as Crown agents, accountable to the government." This statement explicitly sets the CFSAs within government and as an instrument of government, in a way that would probably have been unthinkable three years earlier. The document notes that the Act sets out "to provide the necessary autonomy required by the CFSAs to respond to community needs, while acknowledging the ultimate accountability of government for the provision of child and family services." The document goes on to underscore the primacy and power of the Minister to give "direction" under the Act by underscoring the role of the Minister in…

> Providing priorities and guidelines for it (the CFSA) to follow in carrying out its responsibilities and coordinating the work of the Authority with the programs, policies and work of Government, other Authorities and other public and private bodies in order to achieve the efficient provision of child and family services and to avoid duplication of effort and expense (Alberta, CFSA Act 10).

It is further acknowledged that the Minister has access to all information requested, full inspection powers and the ability to dismiss an Authority:

> If the Minister considers that the Authority is not properly exercising its powers or carrying out its duties under this Act or under an agreement, or if for some other reason the Minister considers it to be in the public interest to dismiss the members of the Authority (Alberta, CFSA Act 18:1).

In this section I have tried to underscore the range, breadth and depth of external structures and systems that were incrementally built around the community governance element of the redesign initiative. These data underscore Greenwood and Hinings (1996) argument that the prevailing nature of change is one of constant reproduction and reinforcement of existing modes of thought and organization. Radical change is problematic because of the normative embeddedness of an organization within its institutional context. The imposition of these external factors would act to inhibit radical organizational change. These structures and systems, embedded as they are in law and policy, supported by large scale organizational systems for dissemination and monitoring for compliance, would exact a level of accountability that would far outweigh the demands for accountability to "community" in the shape of dispersed, loosely affiliated, community-based working and focus groups, and the more isolated individual children, youth and families who use the services.

The policy development process reflects both a response to external criticism and a systemic response within a Westminster model of government. The policy framework presents inevitable constraints on community governance within a Westminster model of government premised on the accountability of the minister and primacy of government in effecting top-down management based on securing an electoral majority. This is a direction further underscored by a government pursuing strong central fiscal management of the budget. The outcome of policy development has to be contrasted with the rhetoric that was used in framing the redesign: The rhetoric over-emphasized the independence of community governance and under-emphasized the role of government. In reality it over-emphasized the "radical-ness" of the proposed change, promising too much of an ASD model. However, policy development was but one dynamic that constrained the redesign process. Other factors in the shape of human resource and financial management issues exerted more constraint.

Limiting Control Over Human Resource Management

In June 1997, the government made a significant u-turn in the plans to reassign its workers to the CFSAs when it announced that, "to ensure that trained and qualified workers continue to deliver services under the new community-based system, staff would now be seconded to Child and Family Services Authorities" (Alberta, News Release 25 June 1997). In an interview later in the year, when asked about the change in plans of privatizing workers, Minister Oberg told the media that "what was going to happen was the workers were going to be fired and then rehired back. If there was a glut of workers, then I think that would be a different scenario. But quite frankly, I couldn't envision firing those workers, paying their severances and then rehiring them back at similar jobs" (*Edmonton Journal* September 15, 1997).

The effect of this on the redesign would be to ensure that social workers and administrative staff remained employees of government with provincial collective agreements. In 1990, following a strike by social workers, workload standards for front-line child welfare workers were signed off ready for implementation in 1991 / 2. These standards were to ensure that staff resources were allocated equitably throughout the province and that workers would have time to provide "quality services to clients." This was a significant breakthrough for the union in trying to address ongoing concerns, as supported by the Cavanagh Report (Alberta, Child Welfare Review 1983), for example, that front-line social workers were overworked and burning out with excessive workloads. The agreement built on a case management model that had been developed over the previous three years by the Department in support of the new Child Welfare Act (1985). To be implemented in 1990 / 1, the model aimed at improving consistency, adherence to departmental policies and procedures, ensuring that work with clients would be both efficient and effective, and improving quality assurance and information systems. The new workload standards, agreed upon with the union, both reflected and reinforced this model. With the u-turn by the minister, these workload standards would inevitably constrain the ability of subsequent community managed CFSAs to redesign and manage work practices in line with their unique service plans.

It is also worth noting broader human resource management problems that would act to constrain CFSAs. Finding and keeping qualified staff remained a problem. The Advocate's report 1996 / 97 (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 1997) suggested that the uncertainty of future employment for staff, due to the pending transfer of responsibilities for child welfare services to CFSAs, had resulted in many staff seeking employment elsewhere. By 1999 / 2000, only 43% of staff had actually worked in child welfare the previous year (Kinjerski & Herbert 2000). This level of inexperience could only exacerbate a feeling of crisis within the Ministry and constrain the capacity of the newly formed CFSAs to affect significant change.

The Adequacy of Financial Resources

As with human resource issues, the redesign process was also constrained by financial resource issues. As highlighted in the Annual Reports of the Office of the Children's Advocate, throughout this period the Ministry consistently found itself on the defensive about the adequacy of its resources to meet its legislative mandate. Prior to the Klein government, the Advocate implied that budget constraints were already impacting the ability of the Ministry to protect children (Alberta, Child Welfare Review 1993). With the Klein government, the child and family services branch of the Ministry was impacted by the cuts of 1993-1994, both by way of a $5 million reduction in funding to contracted agencies and more generally as part of a $5 million cut to administrative costs for the Ministry. The concern around the adequacy of resources was then exacerbated by the significant growth in child welfare caseloads, starting in the second half of the 1990s. In September 1997, the fiscal pressures surfaced in the news media as Minister 'Oberg orders child welfare costs cut' (*Edmonton Journal* 11 September 1997). A potential deficit of $7 million for the Edmonton Region had been identified and the minister's stance was that "this is something that is not acceptable now. I asked the regions to look at all different ways that they could save the dollars" (Ibid.).

The adequacy of funding is a key question when considering factors that either supported or inhibited the change process (Hinings and Greenwood 1988, Pollit 1998). Evidence of inadequate funding to meet its mandate would clearly be an important factor in inhibiting the success of the redesign initiative. However, I have found analyzing the adequacy of funding difficult, based on my analysis of the Ministry's Annual Reports over the past decade. In part, this is due to changing reporting formats and a lack of detail in the public accounts.

Using the numbers available and notwithstanding the cuts noted above, the Ministry serving children and families, like health and education, saw significant increases in its budget over the period under review. This was a point frequently made by Ministers defending themselves against criticism of inadequate funding. However, my analysis of the numbers presented show a more complex story.

Late in 2001, there were a number of news articles following the release of the Children's Advocate's report about the fiscal situation of the Ministry. Minister Evans (*Edmonton Journal* 3 November 2001, A1) argued that a particular news item, which stated the department faced a $40 million reduction due to falling provincial energy revenues, was inaccurate. An earlier news article suggested the Ministry was facing a $40 million deficit and a further $6.7 million reduction, due to a 1% roll back because of falling oil and gas prices (*Edmonton Journal* 6 October 2001, H1, H3). The Minister pointed out that in fact, the department's budget had increased over the past year by $180 million to $647 million for fiscal year 2001 / 02. A more detailed analysis of this disagreement sheds light on the complex budget situation facing the Ministry and therefore the CFSAs.

The $180 million dollar increase suggested by the Minister would put the prior year's budget at $467 million. This is not supported by the Auditor General's Report (Alberta, Children's Ministry's Annual Report 2001, 92), which sets the budget for 2000 / 01 as $536 million and the budget for 2001 / 02 as only $644.5 million. Notwithstanding the differences, however, this would still, on the face of it, be a sizeable increase to the Ministry budget of over 20%. However, the Auditor's report (Ibid) notes the actual expenditure for the Ministry was in fact $585 million for year ending 2001. In effect, the Ministry spent $49 million more than the budgeted $536 million. Even based on the actual expenditure of $585 million for 2000 / 01, there would still have been an increase of over $59 million or 10% with the $644.5 million for 2001 / 02.

However, a more detailed analysis of the Auditor's report shows that nearly $29 million of this increase was from increased transfers from Canada Health and Social Transfer for 2000 / 01 targeted at early intervention services. This would now result in only $30 million being available for the remaining services under the Children's Ministry. By turning to the 2001-2002 Estimates document for Children's Services

(Alberta, Estimates 2001 / 02, 62) one sees that the balance of the $30 million was spread across a number of service items: a $5 million increase to Family and Community Services; a $1 million increase to the Fetal Alcohol Initiative, a $2 million increase to Prevention of Family Violence; a $9 million increase to Program Support Services and a $8 million increase to child welfare.

It is this latter area of child welfare that has been most strongly critiqued by the Children's Advocate as underfunded and in crisis over the past 10 years, and it was this area that had seen the greatest growth in demand. In practice, the $8 million increase amounts to less than a 1% increase, in a year when there was a new salary settlement to be paid for under the master agreement and child welfare caseloads grew by approximately 9% for the same fiscal year. The result was that one of the most difficult areas for CFSA management faced a real cut in funding.

This example demonstrates the complexity of understanding the issue of funding for children's services and the inherent struggles in organizations to control meaning (Heracleous and Hendry 2000). It provides a reason why, on the basis of the global financial data, government members may well feel that the Ministry has received significant increases to its funding, while at the direct service level of the organization, heavily focused on child welfare services, many practitioners feel under-funded to meet increasing demands.

Both to better support and to further develop my argument, I now want to focus briefly on the child welfare funding over the period under study. The first point I want to make is to reiterate the implication of *Children In Need* (Alberta, Child Welfare Review 1993). From the Advocate's perspective, funding was already inadequate to meet mandate requirements at the baseline point of 1992-3. The Advocate's report clearly implies the need for increased funding at that point in time. I want to look now at what happened to expenditures subsequent to that report.

One of the key cost-drivers in child welfare is caseload growth. Caseload had been growing for decades and had peaked at 18,574 cases in December 1982 (Alberta, Family and Social Services, *Annual Report* 1986). The implementation of a new Child Welfare Act (Alberta 1985), which introduced tighter criteria on when child welfare services were needed, resulted in a significant decrease in cases to a low of 7,000 around 1991 / 92. Although some growth was seen from 1992 to 1995, caseloads jumped significantly starting in late 1995 with a 13% increase for 1994-1995, 32% in 1995-1997 and a further 8.3% in 1998-1999 (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Reports 1994-1998). In summary, since 1992 / 93, using average annual caseload figures, the caseload grew by 82%, from just over 8,000 cases to an average of 12,783 cases in 1999 / 00. Over this same time period, expenditures on child welfare also grew 83% (Kinjerski & Herbert 2000, 18-19). On the face of it, as with the analysis above, this would suggest that budgets kept abreast with growth. However, over the same period, the average cost per child welfare case had increased from $11,358 to $14,292, through a combination of increases in human resource costs, a greater percentage of children being placed in more expensive out of home care (compared to those staying with parents or extended family), and inflation. This means budgets had not kept up with the 26% increase in the average cost per case. The 26% had been absorbed through a variety of cost management strategies and cuts. This analysis supports the Advocates' continued critique of inadequate growth in the resources available to children in need. In effect, while overall costs increased, there was a real decline in the dollars spent on services. Further, as noted by Kinjerski and Herbert (2000), budgets approved prior to each fiscal year were consistently less than what was spent the prior year, necessitating the need for repeated in-year adjustments to funding levels. This level of uncertainty simply enhanced a sense of crisis within the Ministry.

A key question associated with these caseload / budget increases is to determine the cause or causes of the caseload growth in the second half of the 1990s. The data reviewed for this dissertation show no level of consensus within the Ministry. In December 1995, the Alberta Liberals sent out a News Release that referenced a "leaked department report" analyzing the reasons for a 19% increase in Calgary's child welfare caseloads (Alberta, Liberal News Release December 1995). The Liberals reported the document as noting that "after 18 months of relative stability in the Child Protection Caseload" there had been "a rapid growth of 13% in the case load in a 7 month period from November 1994 to June 1995." "Possible factors" identified for the increase included "poverty / stress / employment instability / job loss… increased community visibility with the announced move to community services… the relative accessibility of Child welfare as means of support, including financial support, as other programs and departments reduce or eliminate supports and benefits… reopening files perhaps closed too quickly to reduce intrusiveness… [and] stretched workers."

The news release accompanying the Children's Advocate's 1997 / 98 report (Alberta, News release 6 August 1999), identified increasing child welfare caseloads as the most serious issue within the child welfare system. The Minister committed to an independent review of the factors contributing to the growth. The subsequent report *Connecting the Dots* (Kinjerski and Herbert 2000), points to multiple factors, including socio-economic, organizational, human resource, practice and the move to community-based services as all playing a potential role. The report called for a multifaceted strategic response to a multifaceted problem. I found no evidence of a formal Ministry response or action based on the report.

Moving away from the provision of crisis services through child welfare, it can be noted that the government did allocate significant new funds to the Ministry for prevention and early intervention services. As noted earlier, a total of $50 million was to be provided over three years with $10 million being available in 1995 / 96. As of March 31, 1996, a total of 71 early intervention projects had been approved, representing funding of more than $9.8 million. The AFSS Annual Report for the following year (Alberta, Family and Social Services 1997) noted that for the fiscal year April 1, 1996 to March 31, 1997, 234 contracts were in operation costing approximately $12.8 million. The expenditures continued into 1997 / 98. However, in July of that year, the Edmonton Journal reported fears that early childhood programs would now be cut by $7 million for 1998 / 1999. Referring to the $50 million expenditures for early intervention, Social Services Spokesperson Bob Scott said the program was never intended to continue on an ongoing basis and that the money slated for the coming year was a one-year extension "using funds left over from the first three years" (*Edmonton Journal* 22 July 1997).

As valuable as these services may have been, they did not bring about the desired reduction in child welfare caseloads as predicted by the Commissioner. The Commissioner had suggested that that these expenditures would result in significant reductions in the number of children in care (Alberta, Commission of Services for Children *Focus on Children* 1994, 11). In practice, the size and scale of these programs were small and fragmented. As such, their overall systemic impact was insignificant. To be effective, this approach would have required significant, consistent and long-term funding to have a potentially meaningful impact on the need for crisis services. The Advocate (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 1997) argued that this has not been the case: "We have failed to invest in the prevention of those factors that lead families to neglect, abandon and harm their children." New monies also accompanied the Alberta Children's Initiative in 1997-1998. These were again directed to perhaps important new initiatives that could eventually contribute to reducing demand for crisis services, but they did not help to address the immediate perceived funding crisis with respect to child welfare. Further support for early intervention did come from funding by the Federal government, through Canada Health and Social Transfer monies noted above, but in late 2001 many early intervention programs were terminated as the Ministry attempted to manage the deficit situation noted at the beginning of this section.

In this section I have demonstrated that while the Ministry received significant increases in funding, these increases did not keep up with the growth in crisis child welfare services and, as such, created a sense of growing crisis in the Ministry. There is no universally accepted rationale for the significant growth. Whatever the causes, throughout the mid-1990s, the data from the Ministry's Annual Reports show the child and family services area of the Ministry in a constant deficit situation, being heavily subsidized from the welfare savings in the Income Support Program (Alberta Family and Social Services Annual Report 1998). The more recent post-1998 evidence also points to the Ministry in continued financial difficulty facing a deficit and cuts amounting to nearly $45 million or 7% for fiscal year 2001 / 02. I suggest that these data support the Advocate's (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 1997) concern about the adequacy of the "service platform from which the redesign is being built," pointing to a Ministry facing significant fiscal challenges in delivering its crisis child welfare services.

Notwithstanding the fiscal constraints arising from the institutional context of government, throughout the planning phase of the redesign process, expectations for improvements to services had risen significantly. Communities had been encouraged to dream about what changes they would like to see as they redesigned child and family services. However, the impact of the institutional framework of government, through the development of the policy and human resource management frameworks, combined with the very directed allocation of additional funds, placed significant constraints on the CFSAs to redesign and manage. I will shortly turn to how the CFSAs responded to these constraints. However, before doing so I want to consider the motivation, capacity and power of the Ministry to achieve change. The new Ministry and CFSAs inherited longstanding, intra-organizational human resource issues and a growing fiscal crisis that significantly constrained their capacity to change services radically.

6.4 The Motivation, Capacity And Power To Change

The motivation for change at the Ministry level, as revealed by my textual analysis, is more complex than the purely political motivation at the level of the Klein government. The Ministry is the meeting point between the Klein government's political discourse and the social work discourse. I have identified the starting point for the redesign to be a critical report by the first Children's Advocate. The underlying discourse of that report closely resembles the social work discourse set out earlier. This arises from the consultation undertaken by both the Advocate and subsequently the Commissioner, receiving significant input from the social work community. However, while the report set in motion a redesign process that incorporated many ideas from the social work discourse, it was reinterpreted to fit with the new political context presented by the Klein government and the ideology of the "Klein revolution." One assessment of the motivation is captured in a government-sponsored report *A*

Review of the Child Welfare Program by Coopers & Lybrand (Alberta, Family and Social Services 1998). The company was contracted by the Minister to assess the capacity of the Ministry to lead and manage the pending change successfully. The report stated the goal of the redesign to be improving the "quality of services and results while reducing overall cost and to work with the community (to develop) an integrated community-based delivery system for services to children and families" (Ibid., sect.3). However, the report also noted this vision was not widely understood or accepted, and that some four years after the process had started, much work was still required to integrate the activities of key stakeholders to achieve a common vision. There was widely spread cynicism across the social work sector as to the motivation and real agenda of the redesign process amidst an environment of significant cuts to human service ministries.

In practice, the redesign process was divisive, as opposed to consensus-building across the various stakeholders. From the beginning there was a clear message that meaningful change could only be achieved through an external change agent in the form of 'community' and not social work staff and managers. This is probably best summed up in the Coopers and Lybrand (Ibid.) report, when it notes that two years prior to establishing CFSAs staff had been told that they would be "let go" from the devolved structure, sending "a clear message that present staff were unwanted and of questionable competence." Then, following the union challenge on the issue of severance pay, staff and managers were advised that they would be seconded as government employees and that they were critical to the success of the redesign. The fact that privatization was so closely associated with the redesign initiative led AUPE to deny that there were any identified "weaknesses or problems in the present model," attributing it rather to "a purely ideological commitment to downsizing and privatization" (AUPE, *Children At Risk: Responding to the Need* 1994). The union's role had therefore been one of opposition. The community is encouraged to assume the role of redesign premised on the failure of the public sector to provide efficient and effective services, combined with the promise of government to support them in achieving their redesign vision. The Ministry's role became one of managing these competing perspectives while attempting to keep the process aligned with the institutional context of the Klein government.

The result is what Hinings and Greenwood (1988) characterize as a "competitive commitment" to change, in which some groups support the template-in-use, whereas others prefer the articulated alternative from the institutional context or another from the broader environment. Hinings and Greenwood (1988) identified four levels of commitment for or against change: status quo, indifference, competitive and reformative. From this model's perspective, radical change is still possible with a competitive commitment, but requires an appropriate capacity for action and supportive power.

From a change management perspective, there was a weaknesses in the leadership and management of the redesign that would not allow the redesign to overcome the competitive commitment. The Commissioner acknowledged that mistakes had been made. Clarifying the role and responsibility of the Ministry within the redesigned service delivery model began only late in the process. With the first CFSA to be appointed only a couple of months away, the Ministry had done little to define its role, organizational structure and staffing. The Coopers & Lybrand report (Ibid.) recommended the need of "taking charge of change" in terms of strategically managing the pace and scope of transition, clearly defining the role of government post-devolution, adopting a single management system to manage the transition, developing strategic and operational capacity within the program to lead the change process, and developing adequate human resources. I would argue that these insights point to key weaknesses in the Ministry's management capacity and power to achieve radical organizational change. In fact, the Coopers and Lybrand report underscores this point in noting that the lengthy consultation process had resulted in "disempowering staff, disempowering Headquarters and diffused authority and accountability for making change happen" (Ibid., sect 3).

The goal of the redesign of child and family services appears as a rhetorical construction that tries to accommodate the needs of different interest groups, while responding to what was, when it appeared, a likely unwanted report commissioned by a previous Minister. The rhetorical response agrees with the proposal that fundamental reform was required to child and family services and frames that response within the Klein government's discourse. The reform would see government move out of direct service delivery, decentralize child welfare authority, delegate authority to communities, provide resources to deliver services locally, focus on early intervention and integrate services with other departments where it makes sense to do. The redesign promised to meet the needs of a fiscally conservative agenda and improve the quality of services and results.

The processes tracked in this chapter show how in a number of very fundamental ways the brakes were firmly put on this direction as the rhetoric met the reality of the institutional context of government. Differences and ambiguities that were able to coexist at the rhetorical level were unable to coexist at the practical. As operational policy was developed, there was a gradual embedding of the redesign within the broader institutional context of the Ministry and government. This embedding reflected the systemic effect of the Westminster model of government inevitably asserting itself against the implementation of an empowered model of community governance significantly independent of government. This systemic constraining was then further exacerbated by the government responding to external criticisms of it abandoning its responsibilities and accountability for child and family services.

At a practical level, the Commissioner's office worked for too long in isolation from the Ministry and continued with rhetoric that was not in line with operational realities. Overall, the data presented in this chapter points to serious questions about the resource capability of the Ministry to meet its existing child welfare mandate, let alone an expanded mandate arising from the redesign process. This is underscored and supported by the Advocate's (Alberta, Children's Advocate Annual Report 1998) concerns about the adequacy of the existing service platform to support the redesign process. At a fiscal level, neither the early intervention initiative nor the Government-level integration developed quickly or strongly enough to realize the savings required to support the redesign. The early intervention was too small and fragmented to realize systemic change and other departments remained more focused on cost containment, jurisdictions and core mandates in the face of resource pressures, rather than on working cooperatively to address multi-disciplinary issues and to integrate resources and service delivery capacity effectively. The human resource challenges posed by a disenfranchised workforce and the successful challenge of the union in preventing the reassignment of staff to the new CFSAs further constrained the redesign process.

The process as revealed reflects Wilson's (1989) observation that the goal of many government departments is therefore never just business efficiency in pursuit of a bottom line, but rather to meet a whole range of often competing and contradictory political demands. These roles involve reconciling strong differences of interests, developing coalitions across interests and powerful constituencies as much as, or possibly more so, than it does using the rational problem solving processes suggested by private sector management practices. In reality, the Ministry had to attempt to manage contradictory public demands for improved services with government demands for cost savings. Its fundamental goal was to align itself with the government's agenda, while managing external demands and critiques. Nestled, as it inevitably is, within a complex and tangled set of internal and external relationships, the emphasis on rhetorical reconciliation of the competing agendas, over-careful and realistic business analysis and case development becomes understandable. Public servants are expected to facilitate the government's agenda. I am suggesting that these agendas are built on a heady mixture of ideological, analytic and expedient elements in pursuit of election. The practical difficulties of implementation are downplayed or blame is placed on the public servants as resistant or incompetent. In effect, the institutional context of government, as argued by Wilson (1989) pushes public servants to the rhetorical in the hope that it may shape the practical, rather than the practical being the basis for the rhetorical. In this study, senior public servants attempted this reconciliation by pursuing a rhetorical strategy that suggested more could be done with less, that community can choose how to manage while remaining fully aligned to the government agenda. However, the rhetorical has to have enough of a linkage with the practical realities to sustain or achieve real organizational change. This would not prove the case in this study; the rhetorical did not provide a firm enough platform for real change.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the Ministry attempted to respond to external critique and demands for improved services and more resources, while also attempting to remain responsive to the broader conservative fiscal and social agenda of the Klein government. I believe that balancing such contradictory demands resulted in a rhetorical framing of the redesign that made it all things to all stakeholders: for government, it was a cost management strategy that would result in improved services; for the social work and broader community, it was a strategy to improve services. In practice, the rhetoric is allowed to escape the glare of operational reality to the degree that the redesign is separated from the day-to-day practicalities and constraints of children's services for over two years. Those constraints can be characterized from the data presented, as in increasing crisis. Notwithstanding increased budgets, the evidence presented points to these increases not being directed to the crisis child welfare services that were under greatest stress due to increasing caseloads. My analysis raises serious questions about the resource capability of the Ministry to meet its existing child welfare mandate, let alone an expanded mandate arising from the redesign process.

It is only in the latter half of the redesign that the practicalities and constraints begin to exert themselves. My textual analysis shows the gradual embedding of the redesign within the broader institutional context of the Ministry and government, with a series of additional compromises being made to accommodate operational realities and external criticism.

The final part of my analysis will now look at how the "grass roots," "empowered," and "community owned" governance structure (Alberta, Commissioner of Services for Children *Focus on Children* 1994) responded to these constraints. I will examine the ability of the these organizational actors to realize their planned radical organizational change within this institutional context and given the intra-organizational constraints set out above.

CHAPTER 7

THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE AUTHORITIES 1999-2001

7.1 Introduction

A key partner in the proposed change process was 'community' in the form first of Steering Committees and later of Child and Family Service Authority boards (CFSAs). The Klein government had promised to listen to Albertans and to involve them in setting government direction. This commitment to listen was underscored in relation to the redesign by Premier Klein as the CFSA boards were appointed. In the Commission's *Focus on Children and Families* (Alberta, Commissioner of Services for Children, News Letter Issue 4), the premier thanked members of the Steering Committees, Working Groups and all those involved in creating "more inclusive, community based, holistic, preventative support services for all our children," through a "bottom up process that involved a wide cross-section of citizens that clearly placed children and families first." In the same newsletter, the Minister Without Portfolio Responsible for Children's Services stated, "we are giving communities a strategic-planning framework in which they can apply new approaches, innovative approaches, that will strengthen their children, their families, their future." Asked what she would say to the steering committees she replied, "we are listening. As a government, we will continue to listen and act. We are your partners."

In this chapter, I explore how the partnership evolved between the community governance structure and government. I look at which of the two dominant discourses or organizational configurations the community boards adopted and the extent to which the organizational actors involved in the CFSA boards were able to realize their desired organizational change within the institutional context provided by the Klein government.

I begin this process by establishing that there was an inherent tension between the position taken by the CFSA boards and the government agenda by showing that the CFSA boards' commitment to listening to the community placed them closer to the social work discourse than to that of the Klein government. I then examine the institutional reaction of government to this position and the capacity and power of the CFSA boards to respond.

7.2 The CFSAs' Underlying Discourse

The CFSAs found themselves in a dynamic tension between the institutional context of government and the broader environment characterized as 'community' in their documents, but in effect comprised of children and families involved with services, the social workers delivering the services and a number of social activist groups.

Accountability to a "Grass Roots" Constituency or Government

In this section, I more fully explore how the "partnership" between CFSAs and government developed over the first two years of operation, and how the redesign struggled with distributing, "accountability powers among ministers, central agencies, line department officials, managers, clients and community" (Langford 1997). I show the initial directions set out in the CFSA Service Plans built on a "grass roots," ground-up motivation to change radically children and family services, but that inevitably the CFSAs would neither have the capability or power to pursue these objectives within the parameters of the "partnership" as enacted by the Ministry in support of the broader institutional context of government.

The last act of the 18 Steering Committees was to develop and then sign off individual "Service Plans" for each of the eighteen regions. The plans were the culmination of the community consultation and set out strategic directions for the various communities based on that input. By the time the Service Plans were developed, in addition to setting out what were perceived to be unique directions in response to the community consultation, they also acknowledged the reality of constraints or parameters. As noted earlier, *Handbook II – Putting the Plan Together* (Alberta, Commissioner for Services to Children May 1996), had emphasized that there would be some 'givens.' Region 10, representing the capital region, is typical of the tone taken by the CFSAs early in their mandate:

> According to the (Child and Family Services) Act, the Regional Authority will assume responsibility for the day-to-day operations of children, youth and family services. The Regional Authority will be an agent of the Crown of Alberta in carrying out these responsibilities. It will balance the desire for regional flexibility in responding to the needs of children, youth and families in Region 10 with the legislated requirements of all programs, which guarantees

> that all Albertans receive a range and quality of service (Alberta, Region 10 Service Plan 1998, 35).

Other regions expressed the same themes. For example, Region 14 states in its Service Plan that, "community involvement has been the key factor in this system redesign… We asked how [community] wanted to see services for children and families improved to meet [their] needs" (Alberta, Children's Services Region 14 Service Plan May 1998, 4). The Service Plans appear to recognize the CFSAs' accountability to government as agents of the Crown of Alberta. However, all the Service Plans also recognize a responsibility to community. The Region 10 Service Plan goes on to underscore the grass roots vision that had evolved through the redesign process. It emphasized the ongoing need to "actively listen to local communities," to "involve the community," to be sensitive to "the needs of the community," ensuring "ongoing community input into the redesign of children's services" and their role in "identifying community priorities."

I will show that this accountability diminished as the redesign continued to be implemented; however, I want to emphasize that at the beginning of their mandate, the CFSAs were still clearly committed to taking community direction and representing this to government. Their focus had been to listen to children, youth and families across the region about what they wanted to see for child and family services. Their goal was to follow through on what was heard. These sentiments were expressed consistently across all eighteen Service Plans submitted to the Ministry in 1998.

While ‘community’ is consistently used throughout the Service Plans, a review of those consulted, contained in the appendices attached to the plans, shows that the vast majority of those involved in the consultation process were actual children, youth and families who were receiving child and family services, a wide range of professionals involved in providing child and family services, as well as community activists and advocacy groups across both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. At the outset of the CFSAs, all Business Plans demonstrate a profound sense of accountability to this constituency and a responsibility to follow through on their directions, as set out in the CFSA Service Plans. The underlying discourse of this community has much in common with the social work discourse set out earlier and less with the underlying discourse of the Klein government as described in chapter five.

A potential conflict between CFSAs and the institutional context of government now existed, even though it did not appear to be apparent to the CFSAs who continued to understand that government would listen to their direction. In their initial Service Plans, the CFSAs presented themselves in a partnership with government that would allow them to provide both critical feedback and direction to government on behalf of their communities. Region 10 talked of developing “policy and providing direction” to “advocate on behalf of children” (Ibid). The Service Plan from Region 8 noted that, “there is a need to raise awareness of issues, services and our responsibility for children and families in our communities, including government’s responsibility to provide adequate funding for services. The impact of poverty, financial stress and addictions on families must be considered in developing the Regional Service Plan" (Alberta, Children's Services Region 8 Service Plan 1999, 2).

Several of the regions had earlier noted the potential fiscal pressures as they drafted their Preliminary Service Plans or Service Plans (Alberta, Commissioner of Services to Children 1996, 1997, 1998); however, many appeared somewhat confident that government would address their concerns. Region 1 (Alberta, Commissioner of Services for Children Preliminary Service Plan 1996, 6) spoke of the need for the move to earlier intervention services, but asked where the funding for such services would be found. Region 13 (Alberta, Commissioner of Services for Children Preliminary Service Plan 19961996) spoke of developing a system that is responsive to community needs, but stated that it would need additional dollars to do so. Region 6 (Alberta, Commissioner of Services for Children Preliminary Service Plan 19961997, 22) pointed to funding barriers to earlier intervention. Region 17 (Alberta, Commissioner of Services for Children Preliminary Service Plan 19961996) referenced inadequate funding in four of their seven service goals. Region 5 (Alberta, Commissioner of Services for Children Preliminary Service Plan 19961996, 24) identified a key challenge as having insufficient finances to make their plan a reality. Region 8's Service Plan noted that, "it is important for the government to recognize that additional funding will be required" (Alberta, Children's Services Region 8 Service Plan 1999, 47). Region 16, in its Service Plan (1998), describes moving from a "hierarchical top-down decision-making" model to "community partnerships" based on "grass roots decisions." They end their plan with "directions to government" on following the plan, the need for adequate funding, program supports and evaluation, the need to support integrated services, the need for ongoing community representation and improved aboriginal services (Alberta, Children's Services Region 16 Service Plan 1998).

So while the Service Plan documents show the CFSA boards' awareness of their accountability to government, they also demonstrate a strong sense of accountability to a grass roots community process and a sense of the accountability of government to listen to them. This was potentially problematic. As argued by Langford (1997), the key to understanding the possible limitations of community governance within the context of the Westminster model of government is to understand accountability. The Westminster model posits linear accountability of the whole chain of command upward through the minister to cabinet (Aucoin 1995, Langford 1997, Paquet 1997). This is equally implied by the managerialist, top-down, discourse underlying NPM. In this instance, we see a community governance structure that acknowledges vertical accountability, but also sees horizontal accountability out toward the community and a reciprocal accountability of the government to the community governance structure. This is significantly different than the direction taken by the Ministry in framing the community governance model and the legal sentiment of the CFSA Act consultation, which emphasized the CFSA's role as an agent of the Crown, an arm of government that acts on government's authority and one that is subject to the direction of government.

Accountability to a Social Work or Government Agenda

The Business Planning documents are the collective response of the CFSAs to interpreting both the government's agenda and the outcome of the community consultation process. Through the business planning process, the CFSAs translated the aspirations set out in the Service Plans into practice, while dealing with the existing service pressures and the exigencies of the institutional context of government. They are, therefore, a valuable source document to analyse the impact of the two significant underlying discourses that I have associated with this redesign.

These operational pressures idientified in earlier chapters are immediately evident in the first Business Plans developed by the new CFSAs. For example, the 1999-2000 Business Plan for the West Yellowhead CFSA states the goal of implementing the "directions set out in the Service Plan" (Alberta, Children's Services Region 8 Business Plan 1999, 7), but noted cost pressures (Ibid., 29). In its subsequent Business Plan for 2000-2003, the Region noted a 26% growth in the number of children receiving protection services, an 8.2% increase in services to children with disabilities and the need to develop more community resources (Alberta, Children's Services Region 8 Business Plan 2000). The Business Plan concluded that the West Yellowhead CFSA would "face significant challenges in meeting all the expectations outlined in this Business Plan within the allocated budget," and as such, "a number of strategies will be used to curtail expenditures" (Ibid., 32). Notwithstanding such strategies, the CFSA committed to "provide better services to children in the region" (Ibid., 32).

The 1999-2000 Business Plan for Region 16 (Alberta, Children's Services Region 16 Business Plan 199, .3-4) also identified a range of issues facing the region, ranging from high staff turnover, to an increasing number of families experiencing family breakdown, and regional population growth. They identify future challenges as including the need for "adequate funding" (Ibid., 5). In its subsequent Business Plan for 2000-2003, the same region notes a 13% increase in Child Welfare caseloads, a 16% increase in child-care subsidy, and continued population growth.

Other challenges are noted in Region 10's 1999-2000 Business Plan when it described "critical internal pressures" including inadequate numbers of appropriate placements for children, high caseloads and high turnover of staff (approximately 20% in the first half of 1998-1999), in addition to significant increases in child welfare caseloads (Alberta, Children's Services Region 10 Business Plan 1999). The Region 8 Service Plan had earlier captured this issue when it argued that, given that there "are existing services struggling with current funding levels…it is important for the government to recognize that additional funding will be required" (Alberta, Children's Services Region 8 Service Plan 1998).

In the first year of operations, as noted in the Auditor's report (1999-2000), the Ministry received an extra $35 million in supplemental funding to balance its budget. Underlying the corporate deficit was a more difficult fiscal picture. By the end of fiscal year 1999-2000, 7 of the 18 CFSAs had incurred deficits ranging from 4-9%.

These deficits had to be offset in part by surpluses in the other regions, as well as the supplementary $35 million, for the Ministry to balance its budget. A key element of the redesign plan was the reallocation of the available funding across the new CFSA regions. The reallocation was premised on a population-needs model that required monies to be redistributed from the large centres of Edmonton and Calgary to the mainly rural CFSAs. The redistribution of budgeted funds across the new CFSAs was not being achieved as several rural regions were forced to use their budgets partially to offset the deficits of the larger centres. This would further prevent a number of regions from moving on their Service Plans, with those deemed to be overfunded having to plan to cut back on services or become more efficient, while their service plans talked of the need to expand and improve services. These fiscal pressures within the Ministry became all the more obvious with the identification of a $40 million deficit, exacerbated by the additional 1% roll-back in budget, announced in late 2001.

The operational challenges identified by the CFSAs are consistent with the challenges I identified as facing the previous regional structure under Alberta Family and Social Services over the previous decade: inadequate numbers of appropriate placements, high staff turn over, an increasing number of families experiencing family breakdown with significant increases in case loads. Notwithstanding a five-year consultation, redesign and planning process, and the implementation of a new Alternative Service Delivery governance structure, the new CFSAs struggled with the same operational problems that existed at the beginning of the decade and equally identified the inadequacy of their financial resources to tackle these issues. The CFSAs' inability to address these problems is only exacerbated by a policy and human resource management framework that left little room for them to manage the situation. This underlying CFSA discourse affiliates itself with the social work discourse and agrees with that discourse's argument for more resources, rather than simply more efficiency and improved management associated with the NPM discourse of the Klein government.

The reality of child and family services in 2000 is in stark contrast to the idealized image of community management presented several years earlier by the Commissioner of Children's Services at the outset of the redesign process (Alberta, Commissioner of Services for Children *Finding A Better Way* 1994). In this earlier vision, community was to be better positioned than government to solve social problems and community management would achieve significant results "in terms of the effectiveness of services and the overall cost savings" (Ibid., 24). Government was to step back completely from the direct delivery of services, with service responsibility accepted by Albertan citizens through the "contributions of volunteer associations, charities, religious organizations, service clubs and other… establishment of community networks of support and … mutual aid groups" (Ibid., 7). Community management was equated with smaller government, de-professionalization, with more effective services and less expense. None of this vision had become an operational reality through the CFSAs.

In effect, the organizational framework for child and family services has radically changed, but the organization found itself no better equipped than the prior framework to tackle the problems faced by the Ministry. This leads to a central conclusion of this dissertation: neither community governance nor the adoption of NPM practices, such as business planning, had resulted in the Ministry living within its allocated budget or improving outcomes for children and families. I will explore the 'why' of this conclusion in the next chapter. However, in the present context, a key issue is how the institutional context of government, premised on the promise of more with less, would react to this outcome.

In practice, the community CFSA board structure found itself in the middle of the "competitive commitment" I described earlier (Hinings and Greenwood 1988); further, it demonstrated a leaning toward the social work rather than the government discourse. A key factor from the perspective of the literature on radical organizational change would be the ability of the CFSA boards to influence the institutional context of government toward their position and the reaction of a 'listening' government to its appointed community governance structure moving away from its fiscal agenda (Pettigrew 1985, Greenwood and Hinings 1996, Child 1997). I will now turn to how this structural tension played itself out over the first two years of CFSA operation.

7.3 The Impact of the Institutional Context of Government

CFSAs found themselves embedded in two institutional contexts: social work and government. Embeddedness refers to the existence of mechanisms for dissemination and the monitoring of compliance, combined with a focused and consistent set of expectations (Hinings and Greenwood 1988). The institutional context of social work was significant through the professional affiliation of many staff across the organization with social work values and practice. However, it was diffuse due to the very limited power of the professional social workers' association to impose its values, and the loose affiliation of many staff with the formal professional association. The institutional context of government, in contrast, was more direct due to its legislative, policy and funding power over the CFSAs and its strong ability to monitor for compliance. From the perspective of the radical organizational change literature, the latter institutional context should therefore be the more dominant. I will now set out how this institutional dominance exerted itself.

The immediate reaction of government to the overexpenditures of the Ministry and CFSAs in 1999-2000, as noted above, again was to provide year-end supplementary funding to the Ministry. This would be increasingly problematic for a minister and Ministry operating in the institutional context of a government concerned with fiscal restraint. When radical organizational change does not achieve the expected results, in this case improved efficiency and effectiveness, the tendency of the organization will be to move back toward the original organizational configuration or archetype (Hinings and Greenwood 1988). In this particular study, this showed itself by downplaying or moving away from notions of collaborative community governance, a reassertion of the more centralized approach of traditional Westminster models of government, and more 'mangerialist' approaches found within the NPM literature and favoured by the Klein government's fiscal agenda (Aucoin 1995, Langford 2001).

Within a year of being established, there were already some indications of the CFSAs moving off centre stage as the primary vehicle for affecting change for the Ministry. In spite of the several years of public consultation that went into the development of the Regional Service Plans, immediately after the delegation to CFSAs in 1999, the Ministry began to open up new agendas for achieving change through new community consultations in the shape of a Children's Forum (that generated some 140 recommendations) and then a Task Force on Children at Risk (the latter being a political response to a school shooting incident in the town of Taber). These additional and centralized initiatives look odd in the context of a Ministry that had already facilitated a public consultation lasting several years to provide an agenda for change, and where CFSAs were already identifying fiscal difficulties in moving ahead with the identified agendas set out in their Service Plans. These initiatives also appear in stark contrast to earlier assertions that the community management structure would be best able to understand the problems and issues experienced by local children and families and so determine the most appropriate ways of responding to them (Alberta, Commissioner for Children's Services *Finding A Better Way* 1994, 6).

In addition, the Ministry Business Plan itself also moved the CFSAs off centre stage as instruments of change. The Business Plan for 2000-2003 described a "dynamic and committed" partnership between "CFSAs, FCSS, the Youth Secretariat, the Children's

Advocate, and other partnering departments and the Department of Children's Services" (Alberta, Children's Services 2000, 47). This 'dynamic partnership' is again emphasized the following year (Alberta, Children's Services Business Plan 2001-2004), but here the partnership with community is emphasized as a number of centralized Ministry initiatives without mentioning the CFSAs. They are subsequently described in a more instrumental role as building and improving on the "services delivered at the local level better to meet the needs of children, youth and families in their communities." Though perhaps not directed by the Minister, this surface level communicative action by civil servants would have been done in tune with the broader political environment present in the Ministry. This is a dramatic shift from the central role of CFSAs espoused only two years earlier in Ministry documentation.

A third indication of the shift in centrality of CFSAs is the re-expanding role of the central administration of the Ministry during the first two years of operation. The central administration or Department, headed by the Deputy Minister, provides daily support to the Minister in managing his or her portfolio. Throughout the redesign, the role of the Department was left undefined. However, there was a clear expectation that its role as "headquarters" had ended. First and foremost, the CEOs of the eighteen CFSAs all reported to their individual boards and had no reporting relationship to the Deputy. This did not change over the first two years of CFSA operation; however, the Department again grew significantly in terms of number of staff employed and through an increasingly large strategic agenda becoming centralized again, rather than being driven and delegated to CFSAs. In total, the Annual Report for 1999-2000 noted that there were approximately 165 corporate staff who work with the minister providing support for program delivery, partnership development and operations (Alberta, Children's Services Annual Report 1999). This number would rise to over 235 corporate staff by the end of fiscal year 2000-2001. In effect, the Ministry was again developing a strong and large central corporate identity.

This indirect evidence points to a shift from centre stage in promoting the CFSAs in achieving the political agenda of the Ministry. The Minister appeared to be looking for other vehicles to move along an agenda of improved services. The CFSAs had failed to achieve a level of efficiency or effectiveness that would allow them to achieve the budget targets set by government; they had equally failed to persuade government that the answer lay in significant additional resources as argued by the social work discourse. Greenwood and Hinings (1996) explain the response of individual organizations to their dominant institutional environment as a function of their motivation, power and capacity for action. The question, then, is to what degree did the CFSAs have the motivation, capacity and power to affect radical organizational change?

7.4. Motivation, Capacity And Power To Change

The textual data presented above strongly supports that the eighteen regional Steering Committees had a strong motivation and commitment to radical organizational change. With the appointment of CFSA Boards, this motivation had become somewhat tempered by the operational and fiscal realities associated with providing crisis services, but nevertheless is still quite evident. However, the motivation for radical change reflected an underlying discourse closer to that of the social work discourse, set out earlier; the CFSA discourse was premised on an "institutional" approach to social policy, rather than the "residual approach" adopted by the Klein progressive conservative government and rhetorically espoused by the Commissioner in initiating the redesign process. The end point for the Steering Committees and at least the starting point for the CFSA boards were, as noted earlier, more akin to the community governance espoused by the first Children's Advocate through *In Need of Protection* (Alberta, Child Welfare Review 1993).

In this manifestation, community governance represents and advocates the needs of citizens to government; it holds government accountable to its responsibility to address the needs of children adequately and families experiencing hardship or poverty. It does not achieve as a given that more can be achieved with less. Now somewhat in opposition to the government's stated agenda, the literature on radical organizational change points to the importance of power and capacity as a basis for realizing change (Greenwood and Hinings 1996).

With respect to power, Region 14 (Alberta, Commissioner of Children's Services 1997, v) had spoken in their Preliminary Service Plan of the need for government procedures to become more flexible and accommodating of the community process. However, within the legislative and policy framework developed around the CFSAs, I have shown in the previous chapter that power remained firmly embedded in the role of the Minister, and through the Minister to Cabinet and the broader government. This power was both maintained and underscored in the enabling legislation that gave the Minister wide powers in both appointing and, when desired, dismissing a CFSA Board. Although throughout the redesign process there were multiple statements emphasizing a desire to share power with the community, there is no evidence in the extensive public documentation I reviewed of any significant structural or systemic changes to institutionalize any formal power sharing arrangements.

Governance is the exercise of authority, direction and control of an organization or system in order to ensure its purpose is achieved. As noted by Langford (1997), a key problem in using community governance models is the ability to allow a meaningful level of autonomy within a Westminster model of government with its emphasis of Ministerial accountability. The governance framework reiterates from the CFSA Act the specific responsibilities outlined for both Government and the Authorities. The lists are not mutually exclusive, for while the Authorities are responsible for "planning and managing" the provision of child and family services, as well as "determining priorities" in the provision of child and family services and allocating resources accordingly, government is also responsible for "setting objectives and strategic direction for the provision of child and family services" (Alberta, CFSA Act 1998, 8). The overlap is clear when the document states that, "Authorities will work with community and government to identify priorities" (Ibid.). The legislation situates the ability of the CFSAs to plan and manage services in alignment with the government's agenda. The ability of the CFSAs to manage independently, as espoused in the NPM rhetoric, was in effect severely constrained as they were handcuffed to a constraining policy framework and legislative framework—a situation only exacerbated by the constraining human resource and fiscal management context highlighted earlier.

From a capacity perspective, the CFSAs faired no better. The community boards were supported by management teams who were ostensibly the same as those in place under the previous organizational structure. These management teams had been described in the Coopers and Lybrand report, *A Review of the Child Welfare Program* (Alberta, Family and Social Services 1998), as more effective in managing in a transactional, volume-based environment that is crisis or event driven. There is no evidence that they possessed the theoretical or practical skills required to realize the intended radical organizational change or that they would have believed it possible with in the institutional context of government.

7.5 Conclusion

The early phases of the implementation of the CFSAs saw the redesign firmly embedded within the broader institutional context of government and faced with significant operational issues. The Klein government's goal of reducing overall cost, while at the same time improving services, was not achieved (Alberta, Family and Social Services *A Review of the Child Welfare Program* 1998); nor was this a goal ultimately espoused by the Steering Committees or first CFSA Boards. The desired organizational change remained contested, as represented by the two contrasting discourses associated with the institutional context of social work and of government.

If the Klein government's goal was not achieved, it is equally true to say that the Steering Committees / CFSA boards' vision also remained unrealized. The CFSA boards had neither the capacity in terms of resources or power in terms of positional authority and autonomy to achieve their vision of desired radical organizational change.

Simply stated, the result achieved through the redesign was not the vision set out by the Commissioner at the beginning of the redesign process. The system at the end of the decade was not more cost effective, affordable or integrated than it was at the beginning of the decade. There is no evidence to say that it was either more accessible or responsive. Although services were now managed through a community governance structure, there was no evidence of it delivering more positive results for children and families, or that helping children was now everyone's responsibility and dependence on service had been replaced by people caring for people within the community. The service delivery system remained heavily based on professionals and the social service system had grown significantly over the period under review. The system remained much as it was described in the early 1990s in the various Children's Advocates' reports. Government remained central to service delivery and continued to struggle to solve social problems and concerns.

The failure is not a failure of community governance *per se*. I have shown that the community governance model was significantly constrained by the policy that evolved around it in response to the institutional context of government and by the fiscal and human resource issues facing the Ministry. The failure was to place an emphasis on community governance and improved management practices, without apparently understanding the need to manage the institutional context of government actively (Langford 1997) or competently to acknowledge the struggle faced by the Ministry of managing rising demands with diminishing real resources (Pollit, 1998).

In the next chapter, I set out to complete the case analysis (Yin 1989). My goal is to synthesize the data presented in chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 as a basis for interpreting the systemic dynamics associated with the redesign process using concepts from the literatures on radical organizational change and public sector reform. This allows me to move away from the micro and processual analysis of the attempted change process, to a more holistic interpretation the redesign in terms of the different perspectives, commitment to change, capacity and power of the coalitions within the contextual constraints or enabling factors of the institutional contexts. This cross-case analysis facilitates a discussion in the final chapter of the possibilities for governments using collaborative community partnerships as an alternative service delivery model and their potential to deliver improvement in the management and governance of services.

CHAPTER 8

INTERPRETING THE FAILURE TO RADICALLY CHANGE ALBERTA CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

8.1 Introduction

In the previous four chapters, I have looked at the redesign through four organizational windows: social work, government, ministry and CFSA. In this chapter, I want to complete a more dynamic analysis that better describes and understands the interaction between these elements in shaping the eventual outcome of the redesign process. My goal is to return to the fundamental theoretical concerns set out in chapter two. Using these theoretical concepts I want to pull together the pieces of my analysis into a comprehensive argument about how and why radical organizational change failed. In particular, I want to show how the use of concepts from the radical organizational change literature might usefully extend the analysis offered by the public sector reform literature. Building on the research concepts of agency and structure, I probe the interaction between the coalitions and the broader institutional contexts in which the attempted redesign took place.

8.2 Linking The Redesign To Public Sector Refrom

In this study, I have shown the redesign was framed as an alternative service delivery model that promised a fundamental restructuring of the child and family service sector in Alberta (Ford and Zussman 1997). I situated the proposed restructuring within the broader context of public sector reform that swept government across North America, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Rockman 1998). The reform movement is characterized by governments promising to deliver more with less, while increasingly involving a broader citizenry in making decisions (Verma and Lonti 2001). The basis of doing 'more with less' was identified with a broad set of ideas associated with New Public Management. The latter proposed that more and better quality services could be provided at no extra cost through the pursuit of greater efficiency, using private sector management and business practices (Hood 1991). Increased citizen involvement arose from a growing dissatisfaction and distrust of representative government as an effective institution (Armstrong and Lenihan 1999, Delacourt and Lenihan 1999). Both of these thrusts (NPM and increased citizen involvement in governance) found their popular expression in Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) *Reinventing Government*.

These themes both acted as a backdrop and framed the discourse underlying the Klein government's agenda. The Klein government attempted to reconcile a centralizing tendency, focused on actively managing a conservative fiscal agenda using NPM concepts, with demands for increased citizen engagement arising from the public perception that the previous government had lost touch with its citizens. These themes then found their particular expression at the ministry level, as it responded to a critique of the social work system made by the Children's Advocate, *In Need of Protection* (Alberta, Family and Social Services Child Welfare Review 1993). Those charged with the redesign adopted both the language of new public management and the need to listen to Albertans. The redesign promoted radical change that promised improvements to both the efficiency and effectiveness of child and family services and that was based on both a community consultation and community governance structure.

The public sector reform literature argues that such attempts at reconciling NPM and community governance are problematic and oversimplistic. They are problematic because they often fail adequately to acknowledge the difficulties of accommodating community governance within the accountability framework of a Westminster model of government (Aucoin 1995, Langford 1997, Paquet 1997). They are simplistic, because they both downplay the difficulties of doing more with less (Pollit 1998), and the problems associated with managing the differences of interests across different coalitions and interest groups (Wilson 1989, Savoie 1995).

The literature accurately captures the difficulties faced by the redesign of child and family services as set out over the previous four chapters. I have shown the ministry struggled to embrace a collaborative governance structure in a meaningful way, reverting instead to ensuring the more traditional vertical accountability to the minister. The redesign failed to do more with less, requiring constant injections of additional funding. Nor did the redesign reconcile the differences of interests across coalitions. In practice, the process remained divisive. In summary, the redesign failed to achieve its objective of more efficient and effective services. The study reinforces the arguments and findings from earlier public sector reform literature that such endeavours are difficult and problematic. At this level, it adds to the stream of public sector reform research. However, in undertaking this study, I argued that the analysis offered by the public sector reform literature could be usefully expanded, using concepts from the literature on radical organizational change, to provide a more probing and dynamic analysis of the attempted change process.

Using concepts from the literature on radical organizational change, I now want to explain how the institutional context of a Westminster model of government actually facilitated or inhibited the use of a collaborative community governance model, to understand the possibility of those involved in collaborative community governance to realize change in this institutional context. In this particular study, this also includes better understanding the possibility of using methodologies from the private business sector to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services.

In the balance of this chapter, I will refer back to, synthesize, and further interpret the data and analysis of chapters four through seven, using key concepts from the literature on radical organizational change to provide a more probing and dynamic analysis of the attempted change process. My goal is to provide a more comprehensive argument about the how and why of the attempted radical organizational change, an argument that extends and pushes beyond an interpretation offered only through the public sector reform literature. I start this analysis by further analyzing the impact of the institutional context on the change process.

8.3 The Constraining Influence Of The Institutional Context

In earlier chapters, I have shown the original vision for the redesign process to be incrementally constrained by the institutional context of government through both legislative and operational policy. The radical organizational change literature offers an analytic framework to assess how context shapes, facilitates, blocks, limits or regulates radical organizational change.

Institutional theory proposes the structural forms of relevant external institutions inevitably map themselves onto organizations that depend on them for legitimacy, resources or staffing (Powell and DiMaggio 1991). The imposition or mapping of values and ideas onto an organization is theoretically contingent on the "embeddedness" of an organization in its institutional context (Greenwood and Hinings 1996). The values and ideas are associated with coalitions within the institutional context. The ability to embed is seen as a function of the existence of mechanisms for dissemination and monitoring for compliance, combined with a focused and consistent set of expectations. The power of the mechanisms is contingent on their normative power (Barley and Tolbert 1997). Norms are understood as recurrent activities or patterns of interactions that determine 'how' things are done. Their power to influence is, in turn, contingent on how long they have been in place and how widely accepted they are across an organization.

Building on the textual data surrounding and arising from the redesign, I have argued that the institutional context was more immediately dominated by the ministry and broader government, but was also inclusive of the social work profession as a part of the broader environment with which government operated and with which it must interact. From the perspective of the radical organizational literature, therefore, a key element to interpreting the redesign is to understand the degree to which it was embedded and influenced by these two domains.

8.3.1 The Institutional Context of Government

The assessment of embeddedness is fundamentally an assessment of the normative power of the institutional context of the Klein government to map on to the redesign the CFSA organizations, their ideas and values. Theoretically, this power was significant. First, in the context of a Westminster model of government, a government possesses the legitimate power to impose its political agenda premised on winning a simple electoral majority through the ballot box. Structurally, a government is able to embed any dependant organizations by vertically linking them to the Ministry, through legislation, as agents of the crown and through the ministry to the broader context of government. This structural positioning underscores the traditional role of accountability upward through a minister to cabinet addressed in the last chapter (Aucoin 1995, Langford 1997, Paquet 1997). This institutional context of government, therefore, provides the legitimate power and organizational mechanisms to impose a particular government's values and ideas on to a dependant organization (Greenwood and Hinings 1996).

In the case of this study, all of these elements were present and strong. The Klein government had a significant electoral majority to provide legitimacy to its agenda—an agenda clearly positioned within the New Public Management discourse and underscored by a socially conservative agenda. Using multiple annual budget documents, I have shown that the Klein government maintained this fiscal and social agenda over several years. This focus was normatively underpinned by its implementation of a top-down business planning process for the dissemination of its ideas and values. Through this process, individual ministries were held accountable for their results both in terms of service goals achieved and the meeting of fiscal targets. The legislative act of making the CFSAs agents of the crown and the broader operational policy framework surrounding the CFSAs, firmly embed the CFSAs within government, underscoring their vertical accountability through the minister to the government.

The literature on discourse analysis provides insight into the ability of the institutional context of government not only to monitor compliance, but also to actively shape others' understanding (Boje 1995, Heracleous and Hendry 2000, Mills et al. 2001). While the government continually articulated its commitment to listening to Albertans, and rhetorically promoted listening as a basis for its subsequent policy and action, I presented arguments that the consultations were both highly managed and partial. The consultations were portrayed by observers as dominated by business interests, premised on the correctness of the government's fiscal agenda, and unresponsive to criticism and ideas from dissenters (Dabbs 1995, Lisac 1995). In practice the dominant organizational storytelling, controlled and managed by government, filters what voices will be heard.

In this study, the government's ability to shape others' understanding is exemplified in the role of the Office of the Commissioner of Children's Services. Through the role power associated with his position, I showed how he was able to reinterpret the redesign process as initiated by the Children's Advocate (Alberta, Family and Social Services Child Welfare Review 1993) into a framework that fit with the ideology of the government (Alberta, Commissioner of Children's Services *Focus on Children* 1994). Obviously, not everyone accepted this as valid; alternative versions arising from the institutional context of social work coexisted. However, as suggested by Boje (1991, 1995), structures of power relationships within the institutional context repeatedly reaffirmed the government's story or silenced other voices that did not accept or adapt their behaviour to the views of the dominant narrative. This power is reflected by the ready access of government to the media, but also internally through its ministry management structure. In practice, the dominant organizational storytelling was controlled by the government and filtered what voices would be heard and rewarded. The desire for reward and recognition or the personal fear of loss of income or status further coerces individuals to perform activities in alignment with a specific point of view—a point of view constructed within the textual / visual worlds of the dominant organizational storytelling. This was reflected in the textual analysis by perceived gag order on employees and feared loss of contracts by agencies if they did not present as onside. In this iteration, discourse is seen not so much as a medium for the social construction of shared meaning, but as a tool to control. This perspective underscores the *instrumental / managerialist* approach to doscourse analysis, with its emphasis on how discourse can be manipulated by organizational actors to achieve managerially relevant outcomes.

The concepts from institutional theory, underpinned by discourse analysis, show how the institutional context of government is able to map its values and ideas on to the redesign process. What of the impact of the institutional context of social work?

8.3.2 The Institutional Context of Social Work

The ideas put forward by the social work profession to improve services were underpinned, as I set out in chapter four, by a different value base than that expressed by the Klein government through its initial iteration of the redesign. The redesign was couched in a residual discourse, while social work is embedded in an institutional or social developmental perspective (Armitage 1993). It is a discourse premised on the need for more resources. The redesign posits community as an alternative to professional social work, while social work sees its role as critical to empowering and working with community in its struggle to establish equitable conditions and adequate resources to alleviate the conditions that necessitate child and family welfare services.

However, using the same conceptual framework as that used to assess the potential influence of the institutional context of government, the influence of the social work institutional context is not as structurally explicit. The discourse originating from the social work profession is not supported by the legitimacy or organizational power provided to a political party elected as a government. The College of Social Workers were given no formal role in the redesign process and had limited formal mechanisms to influence the redesign directly. No consistent and concerted communications strategy was mounted by the College to influence opinion. Further, social services in Alberta is not totally managed or delivered by social work professionals. From 1993 to 2000 the percentage of child welfare staff with social BSW and MSW degrees dropped from 67% to 54% (Kinjerski and Herbert 2000). Other disciplines, such as psychologists, child and youth care workers and sociology graduates also make up the work force. Therefore, the professional identity was weakened. Its strongest expression came through the independent voice of the Office of the Children's Advocate; however, this appeared to have little impact on government action.

Other coalitions also adopted the social work discourse, but in pursuing their interests, they further embedded the CFSAs in to the institutional context of government. The opposition Alberta Liberal Party critiqued government in support of the social work discourse, but framed its attack as government abandoning ministerial accountability. I suggest this had the effect of driving government to overstate ministerial responsibility and accountability in its policy documents, developed around 1997 and 1998, and in doing so further embedding the CFSAs within the institutional context of government. The Alberta Union of Public Employees also supported the social work discourse, but in its attempts to protect their members by dissuading government from privatization, it also ensured that the CFSAs would remain firmly embedded in the institutional context of government.

Therefore, my assertion is that the institutional weakness of the social work discourse, due to its fragmentation and the competitive commitment of different interests, was in part unable to compete with the institutional context of government and in part further embedded the CFSAs into the institutional context of government. However, notwithstanding this weakness, the social work discourse was also pervasive. The community consultations for the redesign were not overly managed or dominated by business people, like the round tables discussed earlier (Lisac 1995); in practice the community consultations were attended by service users, community activists, and those involved in the delivery of social work. These individuals and groups influenced and lobbied the community Steering Committees. While causality cannot be proven, it is clear that the Service Plans produced by the Steering Committees had much more in common ideologically with the institutional / social developmental approach to social policy, endorsed by the social work discourse, than it had with the residual approach espoused by the Klein government and articulated by the early iteration of the redesign vision.

8.3.3 Understanding the Dynamic Interaction of the Two Institutional Contexts

The interaction of the opposing ideas and values of the two institutional contexts and underlying discourses is interesting from a radical organizational change perspective. From the perspective of the radical organizational change literature, the dominance of the government institutional context is apparent. In comparison with the institutional context of government, the institutional context of social work had no structural or binding mechanisms to shape the redesign. The theoretical result should have been that the redesign was inevitably shaped and constrained by the dominant institutional context of government and its associated discourse. However, this only partially happened in the study.

To this point, my argument, using theoretical concepts form the literature on radical organizational change, underscores the ability of the more powerful institutional context to map itself on to a dependent organization. However, while the initial iteration of the Office of the Commissioner was clearly reframed to fit with the institutional context of government and the agent of change, the CFSA was structurally embedded into this context, its proposed action, its 'service plan,' was closer to the social work institutional context and its underlying discourse.

This leads to a first conclusion with respect to the impact of the institutional context of government on a collaborative community governance structure. The structural embbedness of the community governance structure in the institutional context does not guarantee that the ideas and values of that context will be mapped on to the organization. In practice, the government loses some of the top-down control it is able to exert through the more traditional public sector organization.

Clearly, the more powerful institutional context, by virtue of the embeddedness of the community governance structure, is able to manage this issue. It can dismiss the board or it can sideline the governance structure as a primary vehicle to realize its change agenda. I have argued that the ministry ostensibly did the latter in the early stages of implementation. However, notwithstanding this power, the government still did not achieve its stated objective of more with less, or greater efficiency and effectiveness.

I am arguing that it is reasonable to assert the government was unable to operationalize its ideology and values successfully, because of its dependence on social workers and the ongoing day-to-day resistance from the institutional social work context. This resistance was all the stronger because of the intent to privatize and the denigration of the need for professional social workers that was articulated in the original redesign vision. Notwithstanding its structural weakness, the institutional context of social work was able to influence the redesign in a way that was different than that of the government, but equally important.

This interpretation points to what I consider to be a second critical conclusion provided by a systemic analysis of the redesign from a radical organizational change perspective. The competition between the two institutional contexts resulted in a change stalemate. This is described in the literature on radical organizational change as a competitive commitment resulting in an unresolved excursion (Hinings and Greewood 1988). Both have power, but differentially enacted. If radical change was to occur, there was a need to recognize a systemic codependence between the two contexts or for one party to have greater power than the other to realize its ideas and values. In practice, neither could effectively realize their vision without the support of the other. Neither had the power to achieve significant change without the support of the other. While the government has strong organizational power to pursue a top-down strategy by ensuring that both boards, senior management and policy are more clearly aligned with the government's values and ideas, it is relatively powerless directly to influence the interactions of a semi-autonomous professional staff and their ability to resist change. While the professional discourse influences and underpins the day-to-day interactions between social worker and client, it is relatively powerless to shape the structure and has no control over resources.

My analysis to this point emphasizes the role of the institutional contexts supporting or inhibiting the role of key coalitions influencing and shaping the outcome of the redesign. I have argued that the CFSAs, as a collective dominant coalition, were significantly constrained by the institutional context of government. The institutional context of government effectively constrained the ability of the CFSAs to manage and to govern. I now want to expand on this analysis by further exploring the limitations of collaborative community governance within the context of a Westminster model of government.

8.3.4 Understanding the Fit between a Model of Collaborative Community Governance and the Institutional Context of Government

I have now established how the institutional context of government was able to constrain the redesign process. I want to expand this analysis further by exploring the extent to which the proposed use of community governance itself fit with or challenged that context (Hinings and Greenwood 1988). The redesign initially proposed for government gradually to move out of direct delivery of children's services, delegating responsibility for managing and delivering services to new community Local Authorities. As documented, government was to be a partner with community (Alberta, Commissioner of Children's Services *Focus on Children and Families* Issue 4). 'Community' was presented as better able to understand the problems and issues experienced by local children and families and better able to determine the most appropriate ways of responding to them (Alberta, Commissioner of Children's Services *Finding A Better Way* 1994, 6).

However, the practice of "partnering" with citizens in the act of "governing" presents a number of challenges to any government. Two stand out in the literature on public sector reform. First, the new models of governance frequently present a direct challenge to the traditional governance structures of many democratic governments. Second, in the case of Westminster models of democratic government, they present specific challenges to its concept of accountability. The result, from Langford's (1997, 1999) perspective, notwithstanding the symptoms governments were trying to address, was that the 'cure' frequently created 'side-effects' for democratic governments that they appear to have been ill-prepared to manage. How the redesign addressed these two challenges, sheds further light on the limitations of collaborative community governance as an instrument of change.

The Redesign as a Challenge to The Traditional Governance Model Operating in Alberta

Though widely known in a general sense, for the purposes of my exposition, I want to set out more explicitly the elements of the traditional Westminster model of government. Langford (1999) describes the Westminster model of government as built around a number of key elements. First, the first minister and cabinet dominate both the agenda-setting and policy-making processes; they are supported by strong central government agencies that act as both policy and spending gatekeepers, setting down the rules for how the rest of government organizes itself and conducts government's business. In this model, services are normally delivered by individual departments, led by ministers, and managed and staffed by professional public servants. Traditionally, values of political neutrality, equity, fairness, the protection of privacy, and the maintenance of a balance between openness and confidentiality have been the hallmarks of public service. The opposition parties, the media, and a number of guardian agencies exercise oversight of government activities and practices. Citizen participation is achieved through involvement in party politics and pressure groups, and citizen representation through an election process premised on achieving a simple electoral majority of elected members. The government understands its election as legitimating the implementation of its policy platform over the term of its office. I contend that this fairly describes the operation of the Klein government.

As established in my review of the literature on public sector reform, this model of governance was being challenged throughout the 1980s and 1990s (DiIulio et al. 1993, Aucoin 1995, Peters 1995). Under fire as inefficient and ineffective, governments found themselves pressured to enlist citizens as active participants in both developing and achieving key social goals. I have established that these challenges existed for the Klein government, exacerbated by a level of political expediency arising from the perception of the immediate progressive conservative predecessor as distant and out of touch with the electorate. The Klein government had a political need to show that it was listening and responsive to Albertans.

However, the partnership proposed by the redesign went beyond simply listening, to imply a desire for a genuine collaborative partnership between government and citizens. This raises the question of whether the Klein government was prepared to manage the side effects. Politically, I contend, the adoption of a collaborative governance model implies that the premier and cabinet, regardless of their individual personality or preference, should have collectively understood that governance was changing dramatically as compared to their traditional model. By definition, collaborative community governance implies a reduction in the policy latitude of ministers by introducing a strong element of negotiation into the partnership relationship with government and minister (Mintzberg 1996). While the data shows that this was understood rhetorically and attempted at a ministry level, I found little evidence that it was understood or systemically acted upon by the broader institutional context of government.

A collaborative partnership inevitably involves the sharing of power. In government, power could be shared in a number of ways. First, the ministry could have *delegated* some of its authority to the community boards, which would then have had the right to exercise it. Alternatively, it could have created *joint* decision-making structures. The enabling legislation for the Child and Family Service Authorities appeared to favour delegation, building on Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) idea that government should empower citizens by pushing control out of the bureaucracy and into the community. CFSAs were to be allowed the independence to establish new rules and procedures to make operations more flexible, cost effective, responsible and responsive. The rhetoric of the redesign process talked of partnership.

However, as argued above, the culture of top-down control prevailed. While the redesign framework implies a genuine negotiation in the partnership relationship between government / minister and citizen board, the possibility of government significantly changing its fiscal or social policy direction based on such input did not occur. On the contrary, at a system-wide level the government continued to manage within the confines of the more traditional command and control model of governance in pursuit of its fiscal and socially conservative, residual agenda.

The collaborative partnership also implied new roles and skill sets for departmental employees, moving from a control or policing role to the mindset of facilitation and coordination. The department did restructure in response to the appointment of the CFSAs, with joint planning processes being developed and then going through various iterations better to accommodate CFSA input. However, my own interpretation of the data points to an increasing reversion to central control by the department as it grew in size. This tendency was reinforced when CFSAs failed to achieve adequate fiscal economies and the ministry found it self with new fiscal targets. A collaborative approach implied public sector managers would emphasize relationship-building, negotiating, contract management, risk assessment and performance management skills to work effectively in a partnership world (Armstrong and Lenihan 1999). I found no evidence of formal staff development initiatives in these areas as I reviewed the Ministry and CFSA business and service plans.

In summary, at the level of the broader operations of government, the Klein government continued to operate in a predominantly traditional control and command model of governance, with no significant structural shifts evident to accommodate the new collaborative governance model. Beyond a rhetorical commitment of government to listen and include the views of citizens, I found no evidence of a broader consideration or political debate of the impact and potential of collaborative community governance on the practice of government. The ministry level of government clearly did take steps to accommodate the new CFSA governance structure. However, the framing of the delegation to the CFSAs through the Child and

Family Service Authority Act simply reinforced the traditional bottom-up accountability to the minister and little to emphasize the accountability of the minister to CFSAs.

This review underpins the analysis offered by the radical organizational change literature that 'fit' with context matters to achieving radical organizational change (Hinings and Greenwood 1988). The more traditional model of governance, set out by Langford (1999) fits with the essentially top down, managerialist / NPM agenda of the Klein government. Hinings and Greenwood argue that where the fit is good between the original organizational template and the context, there is more likely to be inertia or an aborted excursion with respect to radical organizational change. There is some evidence in the early phases of the implementation to suggest that an aborted excursion—understood as temporarily and in a limited way moving from an original organizational template, but which is later re-established—is exactly what was happening in the study.

The Redesign as a Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of Accountability in Westminster Models of Governance

Inextricably linked to the issue of fit is that of accountability. Accountability in government is a central issue for an individual minister and for government as a whole. As described by Langford (1999), accountability in the traditional model of governance focuses on an individual minister to at least answer for the behaviour of his or her administrative responsibilities. In the development of programs and the delivery of services, a public servant's accountability is upwards, via superiors, to the minister. Desautels (1999) proposes a fundamental principle of accountability when he references the United Kingdom's Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Committee). It states that, "When a citizen receives a public benefit, government is responsible for safeguarding the public interest of both the user and taxpayer regardless of the status of the provider." For Desautels, this principle argues that government is responsible and accountable, whether a program is delivered by traditional means or through a collaborative arrangement. Managing the issue of accountability was, therefore, critical to the redesign process as it attempted to introduce a collaborative governance partnership. The systemic challenge facing the redesign was how to maintain the accountability of government to citizens, within the shared accountability implied by a collaborative partnership.

The direction taken in the redesign in the end was to conserve and underscore the traditional approach. As noted, the enabling CFSA legislation underscored the primacy of the minister and his / her accountability. I have argued that this was in response to external criticism from the Liberal and New Democrat opposition parties, the media and unions who argued the redesign amounted to an abandonment of government's responsibility to Alberta's needy children and families. While it is difficult to imagine that the government could have ignored or resisted this criticism, I think it showed little imagination in managing the issue. In espousing a model of collaborative governance, the ministry and government needed to develop an approach to accountability that addressed the challenge of balancing accountabilities: vertical accountability to the minister, internal reciprocal accountability between the collaborating parties, and horizontal accountability of both parties toward citizens (Lomas 1996).

No such imagination or creativity was brought to the process. The data only shows the incremental mapping of a traditional understanding of vertical accountability on to the redesign process as public pressure and criticism was mounted. Collaborative partnerships can put a strain on the accountability of government to citizens by placing a significant responsibility for service delivery on the CFSA, without direct accountability back to the legislature. The direction taken by government in the later stages of the redesign ensured vertical accountability premised on its need to be accountable to citizens.

One of the side effects of this focus on vertical accountability was to undermine the results-oriented approach of government, an approach that would tend to downplay accountability for safety, due process, professional standards, and probity. The overarching concern with vertical accountability made such concerns inevitable. The underlying implied philosophy of telling the government "what" was achieved, without paying attention to "how" it was achieved proved to be naïve. Governments' standing and sometimes survival often depends on their behaviour and the behaviour of their agents, not just on the outcomes they produce. In this regard, the issue of vertical accountability played itself out in the development of extensive standards that would limit the "how" of CFSA strategies, as much as the "what" of the desired results.

The outcome with respect to internal mutual accountability of the parties was much less satisfactory. While the accountability of the CFSAs to the minister was protected through the enabling CFSA legislation, there was little to hold the minister accountable to the CFSAs. Further, the joint horizontal accountability of the parties involved to the Alberta public and in particular the individuals, families and communities affected by child and family policy and services also remained largely undeveloped. While the CFSAs saw themselves as outwardly accountable to citizens, as well as upwardly accountable to government, there is little evidence how this accountability was to be enacted or the consequences for failure.

In practice, by not thinking through and addressing the issue of accountability in advance, the Office of the Commissioner and the Klein government left themselves open to the pursuit of a reactive and conservative strategy to external criticisms. The issue of accountability within a collaborative partnership required public debate early in the review process and imaginative proposals on new systems to ensure it within the institutional context of representative democracy. Serving the public interest is central. In implementing a collaborative arrangement, there is a need to balance competing interests, ensure that the public purposes of the arrangement are met, and maintain the values of fairness, impartiality and equity. Collaborative arrangements need to be as open as possible in terms of agreements, decisions and information on achievements, more so than traditional structures that have built-in mechanisms for ensuring transparency and / or for registering complaints. The Office of the Commissioner and the Klein government clearly failed in this regard and, as such, the traditional approach of the institutional context reasserted itself (Hinings and Greenwood 1988).

8.4 Interpreting The Failure Of The Office Of The Commissioner As An Agent Of Radical Organizational Change

As noted earlier, there has been an ongoing argument in the organizational change literature for a better understanding of the interaction between agency and context (Pettigrew, 1987; Greenwood and Hinings, 1996; Child, 1997; Barley and Tolbert, 1997). In considering the role of the institutional contexts and their impact on the redesign process, I have used concepts from the radical organizational change literature to explore the specifics of this interaction in the redesign process. I have assessed how the different coalitions found their ideas and values facilitated or constrained by the institutional contexts. I now want to interpret the change process from the perspective of the role of the Office of the Commissioner, identified as a dominant coalition in the redesign process, but also as the architect of the redesign process and a critical change agent. I think two ideas from the radical organizational change literature are critical. The first is the need of any change agent to manage the structural resistance to change arising from its institutional context. The second and associated idea is the need to reference and utilize the dominant institutional ideology of that context to facilitate successful change (Pettigrew 1987).

That the Office of the Commissioner understood the difficulty of affecting radical organizational change in the context of government is not in doubt from my perspective. The Office of the Commissioner acknowledged numerous prior failed attempts at change. The Office of the Commissioner also attempted to liberate the redesign process from the existing context. Using an idea from *In Need of Protection* (Alberta, Child Welfare Review 1993), the Office of the Commissioner established a separate management structure and process for the redesign, set apart from the existing Ministry and regional structure. This separate management structure is then linked to and led by a community Steering Committee framework that is to enable radical organizational change of the government social work bureaucracy.

The Office of the Commissioner also shows a clear understanding of the need to reference and utilize the dominant ideology, in this case that of the Klein government. I have shown how the early documents associated with the redesign are rhetorically congruent with both the fiscal, participative and socially conservative discourse of the Klein government. The Office of the Commissioner takes ideas from the social work discourse and reframes them in terms of the Klein government's discourse, apparently attempting to bridge the two domains rhetorically.

From the perspective of the radical organizational change literature, both strategies should have enhanced the potential ability of the change agent to affect change (Pettigrew 1985). However, the eventual outcome was not greater efficiency or effectiveness. How might this failure be explained using concepts form the literature on radical organizational change?

The Klein government pursued a fiscal and socially conservative agenda premised on listening to Albertans as active participants in shaping that agenda. As documented, the Office of the Commissioner's change strategy ensured that the redesign process aligned itself with the Klein government's discourse on fiscal and social conservatism and premised this as being based on what Albertans had told him through the consultation process. However, while rhetorically promoting an agenda premised on what Albertans want, in practice he substantively ignores the input.

I have characterized the participative discourse of the Klein government as in part rhetorical, in that it conjures up an image of Albertans based on an idealized version of its settler roots interpreted through a socially conservative ideology, but as practically highly managed and partial, in the sense that it was premised on listening to Albertans who understood there was "no alternative" to the Klein agenda and not on those who would dissent. In establishing the Steering Committees, the Office of the Commissioner rhetorically cast the community as ideologically at one with the Klein government, presenting the organizational villain of the piece as the ministry bureaucracy and government social workers, but at a practical level ensuring the latter's voice is most strongly heard.

The Steering Committees, while clearly not oppositional to the Klein discourse, found themselves through their community consultation process adopting a perspective much closer to what I have characterized as the social work, rather than the Klein government, discourse. As argued, this is explained by recognizing the pervasive influence of the social work discourse throughout the consultation process of the redesign. This constituency was active throughout the consultation and was more representative of what the Klein government characterized as the "MUSH" opposition, than the business sector constituency and rural power base that supported the Klein government's discourse. The issue is further exacerbated because, rather than being a highly managed process, the Steering Committees were placed very much in control of the process and encouraged to spend the first two years of the process "blue skying" or dreaming of what they wanted to see for children and families based on their consultations with community.

While the intent of the process was to break free of the existing paradigm, in practice it was more effective in breaking free of the government's underlying discourse. As I have set out, the liberation was short-lived, as the normative power of the institutional context of government systemically reasserted itself over the redesign process. This latter process acted as an organizational script (Boje 1991, 1995; Barley and Tolbert 1997) through the mechanisms of government. As I have shown, these mechanisms were powerful enough to define organizational actors' roles, sequence plots, and to interpret past and future experience (Boje 1995). It was a script that was enabled through the normative power held by government and it is through this normative power that the government is able to delegitimize or silence voices that do not accept or adapt their behaviour and views to that endorsed by government.

In this context, the ability to realize change becomes a function of the change agent being able to negotiate successfully with the external dominant coalition conditions in support of the change process (Pettigrew 1985, Child 1997). As documented, the Office of the Commissioner failed in this task. The Office of the Commissioner mistakenly saw the target for change as only the ministry, comprised of civil servants and social workers, and had tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to manage this through a separate change management structure. The Office of the Commissioner failed to see the need to negotiate a new accommodation with the structural context of broader government if he genuinely wanted to establish a collaborative community governance structure. This structural context was systemically at odds with the Office of the Commissioner's vision for redesign premised on a collaborative partnership. Such a vision ran counter to the top-down "corporate conglomerate model" where in financial reporting terms, Treasury was the "corporate head office with ministries being corporate subsidiaries" (Goodkey 1990, 70). In advance of the redesign process being undertaken by the Steering Committees, the Office of the Commissioner appears to have done little to think through and negotiate the systemic and structural distribution of accountability powers among cabinet, minister, caucus, the line department officials, boards, managers, clients and citizens (Langford 1997). Without such negotiation the contextual resistance to change was more likely to result in the reinforcing of the existing modes of thought and organization found in the Klein government (Greenwood and Hinings 1996).

If there was a failure to negotiate effectively with the context of government to accommodate the proposed change, there was an equal failure to win the support of the institutional context of social work. Greenwood and Hinings (1996) argue that radical organizational change will only occur if the interests of key organizational actors become associated with a competitive or reformative commitment. As noted above, the social work context was minimized by the Office of the Commissioner and effectively framed as a barrier to improving child and family services. The reality was that its support was critical to affecting the desired change. The end result might best be characterized as a reformative commitment, in which all coalitions are opposed to the template-in-use and where all prefer different articulated alternatives. The outcome as suggested by Greenwood and Hinings (1996) is then more likely contingent on the power of any one of the dominant-coalition to achieve its articulated vision over those of the other groups. This is in part what happened, as the values and ideas associated with the institutional context of the Klein government prevail over the vision developed by the Steering Committees, but without achieving the desired improvements to child and family services.

My conclusion is that the change management process and its outcome represent a significant change management failure for the Office of the Commissioner. Instead of facilitating a collaborative process in the interests of children and families, the Office of the Commissioner was instrumental in placing in opposition two institutional sectors, where neither was able to achieve significant systemic improvements without the support of the other. It must be acknowledged that this presented significant challenges to the Office of the Commissioner as a change agent. There were significant structural constraints arising from the fundamental differences between the two discourses associated with government and social work respectively. However, the goal of a change agent is accurately to assess the diverse forces in play and facilitate a way forward that would inevitably have required compromise on both sides. This may or may not have been ultimately successful; my critique is that it was not seriously attempted.

This analysis leads inevitably to a consideration of organizational capacity (Greenwood and Hinings 1996). Organizational capacity is understood by the authors as a capacity to manage change. This capacity is seen as a function of the change agent's leadership, change management knowledge and skill base. In the case of successfully achieving radical organizational change, the literature points to the need of transformational leadership combined with technical change management expertise within the organization to design and to move the organization to an alternative structure and system with different underlying values. As evidenced by the research literature, radical organizational change is difficult to achieve and the prevailing nature of change is one of constant reproduction and reinforcement of existing institutional modes of thought and organization (Greenwood and Hinings 1996). A difficulty facing any large scale restructuring process is the tendency of managers to down play the difficulty of making a complex change agenda happen or an underestimation of the tremendous inertial forces present both within an organization and across an institutional context.

The Office of the Commissioner was weak in its organizational capacity. This weakness is evidenced first in its capacity to provide transformational leadership. The need for transformational leadership to implement radical organizational change is strongly supported by Tushman and Romaelli (1985) and by Nadler and Tushman (1990). Transformational leadership involves both a "charismatic" set of skills around envisioning (articulating a compelling vision, setting high expectations, modelling consistent behaviours); energizing (demonstrating personal excitement about the process, expressing personal confidence, using success) and enabling (expressing personal support to those involved in the process, empathizing, expressing confidence in people). To what extent were these qualities present in the leadership of the redesign? As documented, the envisioning was challenged and sceptically received. While the selected community leadership was energized, the social service sector appeared fatigued and stressed by the redesign process. While the community felt enabled, the divisive messaging of the redesign left many professionals working in the field feeling marginalized and frozen out. In sum, the charismatic skill sets were weak.

However, a more pertinent question might be to ask the degree to which a government context permits charismatic leadership. In a minister-led system, I would argue that it is difficult for senior civil servants to show the kind of charismatic leadership envisioned by Tushman and Romanelli (1985) The charismatic leadership would therefore probably have to originate from the minister, or at least the minister would need to support such behaviour from a civil servant actively or to engage such a leader from the community. It is evident that this was a consideration in the redesign process. The original Commissioner, a career civil servant, left and was replaced by a city social service manager. The new Commissioner attempted to demonstrate transformational leadership with internal and external community stakeholders; however, his credibility in doing so was severely circumscribed by the tone for the redesign set down by the original framing of the redesign process. However, my analysis of the institutional contexts suggests that it was equally important for him to engage "transformationally" with the institutional context of government.

In this respect, the person selected did not have the status or prior political involvement required to affect such influence. This returns the emphasis to the need for transformational leadership back to the minister. Throughout the redesign process the ministry had four different ministers. Continuity of leadership, given different personalities, interests and skill sets, was therefore hard to achieve. Although all ministers remained supportive of the redesign, my assessment is that none showed the level of charismatic leadership set out as necessary by Tushman and Romanelli (1985).

Nadler and Tushman (1990) also argue that while charismatic skills are necessary, they are of themselves inadequate. An additional set of skills is required around "instrumental" leadership through the creation of competent teams, competent management of those teams, and the ability to analyze, plan and technically lead the development of new structures and systems. Against this criteria, I would argue that the process was found wanting. The Office of the Commissioner's strategic analysis of the underlying problems facing child and family social services was superficial. The texts reviewed show limited analysis, unsupported by data, but rhetorically framed to fit with the dominant ideas and values of the Klein government. The Office of the Commissioner's analysis of the fiscal situation facing the ministry and his proposed solutions, involving early intervention and cross-ministry integration, were equally superficial and poorly executed. No detailed business case was made to give any credence to the arguments that early intervention and cross-ministry integration were realistic strategic vehicles to affect significant fiscal savings.

As underscored by Pettigrew (1987), Greenwood and Hinings (1988) the tendency of managers to under-manage the change process played itself out in the redesign process. They argue this is in part due to a lack of systematic frameworks available to managers for understanding and analyzing situations of major organizational transformation. The lack of any adequate framework is evident in the redesign change process. The Office of the Commissioner uses a simplistic model reminiscent of Kurt Lewin's (1951) early work on affecting organizational change. The strategy attempted to "unfreeze" the organization through the use of external change agents separated from the existing structure, that they would develop a new model, and then the system would refreeze around the imposed new structure. The ability of an agent to achieve radical organizational change would have been better served by utilizing a more sophisticated change management framework built from more contemporary radical organizational change literature and research, such as the framework developed for this dissertation. In not doing so it weakened its chances of realizing what was always a very difficult change project for any change agent.

The failure of the Office of the Children's Commissioner to act as a successful change agent for radical organizational change underpinned the subsequent failure of the Steering Committees and CFSAs to act as agents of radical organizational change. The explanation is in terms of both their limited capacity as volunteer community representatives and circumscribed normative power to affect systemic change as compared with both the ministry and government. With respect to the institutional context of government, while the members of the committee were all vetted and approved by government, the committees did not appear to be strongly affiliated with the progressive conservative party or its leadership. Their ability to influence this context was therefore premised more on the willingness of the Government to listen to Albertans, than by virtue of their political connections and influence. With respect to the social work institutional sector, their ability to demonstrate charismatic leadership was also circumscribed by the original positioning of the redesign by the Office of the Commissioner. While their eventual position had much in common with the social work discourse, the Office of the Commissioner had, in effect, positioned them in opposition to this sector for much of the redesign process. An institutional group who should have been supporting the directions set out by the Steering Committees found itself resistant and distrustful of the change.

8.5 Interpreting The Redesign Process As A Failure Of Government

I now want to turn from interpreting the redesign as a failure of the Office of the Children's Commissioner as an agent of radical organizational change, to a consideration of the role of government in this failure. I first look at the success of the Klein government in achieving its objectives and then turn to its capability at managing the change process associated specifically with the redesign.

The Strengths of the Government's Agenda Assessed Against its Stated Objectives

As I showed earlier, the Klein government has actively used concepts and ideas from the private sector, what can be generally described as a NPM strategy, to pursue its political agenda. It has characterized itself and governance in business terms: It adopted a longer-term focus through its business planning and budget review process. It instigated a results-based philosophy, attempting to shift its focus from what was being spent to what was being accomplished.

My textual analysis showed the Klein government stayed politically focused on its fiscal agenda. Notwithstanding the issues raised in chapter 5 as to the degree to which it manufactured the perceived fiscal crisis or with the correctness of the proposed solution (Cooper and Neu 1995, McMillan and Warrack 1995), after several years of following its business-planning and performance measurement cycle, the government eliminated its deficit and made significant headway on eliminating its total debt. As with any change process, this can in part been be attributed to chance events associated with the fluctuating world prices for oil and gas, but it is also clearly attributable to the clear set of expectations that the Klein government articulated with respect to its fiscal management agenda and its tenacity in pursuing those goals. In pursuing these goals the Klein government was pragmatic in acknowledging its weaknesses and adjusting its strategic course when required. It has been equally pragmatic in acknowledging weaknesses in its processes, such as the need better to identify and measure its performance against targets, to achieve greater collaboration between ministries, and to improve competency in developing meaningful three year business plans (Davies 1999, Goodkey 1999).

The government has also been consistent and transparent in publicly articulating what amounts to its social policy agenda, although the phrase "social policy" never appeared in any of the business planning documents reviewed for this study. Premised on an ambivalence about the role or ability of government to solve social problems, it consistently emphasized a residual approach to social policy based on individual responsibility, the supportive role of community, and underpinned by a belief that government's role was to intervene only where the former had failed in their responsibility. Further, as documented, notwithstanding its stated residual ideology, the government could correctly point to fulfilling its self-defined role by providing significant increases in expenditures for child and family services over its last three terms when needed.

From this perspective, I contend the Klein government can be assessed as successful against its **own** stated criteria for success. While legitimate questions can still be raised of whether it correctly framed the problem facing the province or the appropriateness of its prescription (Harrison and Laxer 1995), I want to focus on other issues. From the perspective of my research focus, I question how it allowed the redesign process to drift from its stated objectives and, perhaps more fundamentally, to what degree its strategy as a government effectively addressed the social service needs of children and families.

Managing the Strategic Process of Government

Notwithstanding its success at implementing its broad agenda based on its business planning process, the flaws of the redesign process identified earlier were not proactively managed by the Klein government's process. In part, I think this reflects an issue of timing. The redesign commenced immediately after the election of the Klein government in response to the government-commissioned report of the Children's Advocate *In Need of Protection* (Alberta, Child Welfare Review 1993). The government's business planning process was, at that stage, in the early phases of its implementation and its change agenda large. I believe it is reasonable to suggest the redesign would have been kept more tightly aligned with the government's overall agenda if it had occurred later. However, having made this point, it is worth reviewing again the process as it reveals what I think are some fundamental challenges of applying NPM in the political context of government.

I have argued that no rationally compelling political or operational case was made for commissioning *In Need of Protection* (Ibid.). Its production involved a broad provincial consultation and its recommendations argued the need for radical organizational change, with little in the way of substantive analysis as to why this was required or why the report's proposed solutions would achieve improved effectiveness. The conclusions of the report, critical of the progressive conservative government's policy toward children, were not acceptable to the new Klein government. The government's response was to endorse another and longer period of public consultation. The content of the two consultations are remarkably similar, the framing of the conclusions drawn are not. However, in common with the former report, the latter equally presented no substantive analysis as to why its proposed solutions would result in better outcomes for children and families.

This study does not support the rhetorical framing of NPM as the use of rational business and management practices in pursuit of efficiency and effectiveness (Pollitt 1998). The process rhetorically framed the content of the consultation to fit with the ideology of the Klein government. The communicative level is framed as NPM, while the underlying discourse is purely political (Heracleous and Hendry 2000). This is much closer to the argument that the role of government involves attempting to reconcile strong differences of interests by developing coalitions across interests and powerful constituencies as much as, or possibly more so, than it does using rational problem solving processes suggested by private management practices (Wilson 1989, Savoie 1995).

I think this critique can be taken further by proposing that too much is promised by NPM, if it is understood as implying that private sector management practices are in some way more rational in pursuing efficiency and effectiveness, than those traditionally used by government. Pettigrew (1972, 1977, 1980, 1985) has offered a sustained critique of overestimating the rationality of private sector management practice. He argues that structures and strategies are not just rational constructs in pursuit of efficiency, effectiveness or adaptability to external conditions. They are also used to protect the interests of the dominant coalition within organizations. They are premised on the ideology and capabilities of those same dominant coalition. In essence, they represent political, and cultural, as well as rational processes. These processes play an equally important, perhaps more overtly important, role in the context of government.

Based on the above analysis, two criticisms can be made of the Klein government. First, by applying NPM criteria to the overall management of the redesign process, one can conclude that the Klein government failed. The use of private sector business and management practices was superficial. Against NPM's criteria of improved efficiency and effectiveness, the redesign failed. Second, that the NPM was used to mask, to falsely rationalize, an essentially political process.

The Political Management of the Redesign Process

Notwithstanding the Klein government's success in achieving its fiscal targets, I contend that the government failed in its attempt to improve services and outcomes for children and families significantly through the redesign process. I am going to argue that this was a failure of the Klein government's political management of the redesign process.

The literature on radical organizational change posits that such change inevitably juxtaposes the rational and the analytical with the political, the quest for efficiency with the search for individual power and success. This is mixed with the vicariousness of change and the enabling and constraining forces of the environment (Pettigrew 1985, Child 1997). The resolution of these dynamics and differences requires those leading the change to manage the change process actively; in the context of government, it requires management and politics (Wilson 1989, Savoie 1995). In this context, I understand politics to be the management of the competing and sometimes contradictory public demands for services, the resolution of which is a political and not simply a rational analysis of efficiency and effectiveness (Wilson 1989). My framing and analysis of the redesign process situated this process at the level of the ministry and in the hands of a senior civil servant. I have characterized this civil servant as trying to reinterpret the content of a consultation to fit with the political ideology of the government in power. The reinterpretation was neither grounded in the reality of the service system under review, nor based on any genuine consensus on a desired new organizational template (Hinings and Greenwood 1988). I have assessed the outcome as a failure when measured against its stated goals.

I contend that the political resolution should not have been left to a civil servant, but was a fundamental responsibility of the politicians. It is the role of politicians to facilitate adequate public debate and consensus-building between the government, citizens and stakeholders in the shaping of policy. This was not achieved. Rather, an ideological discourse and agenda was layered over a system and an essentially coercive change strategy was attempted. The fact that the commissioned Coopers & Lybrand *Review of the Child Welfare Program* (Alberta, Family and Social Services 1998) found no coherent and generally accepted strategic social policy framework for the Ministry, underscores this point. Arising from an informal set of discussions in the early part of 2001, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General in Alberta publicly circulated a series of "dialogues" on the public policy development process (Alberta, *The Hancock Dialogues* 2001). One of the key ideas presented though the dialogues was the recommendation to expand the role and responsibilities of elected officials in the departmental and overall government policy development process. I agree with this sentiment and contend that the redesign process would have benefited from more considered review and debate by elected officials.

However, a key challenge for these elected officials would have been the Klein government's "residual" approach to social policy, which was not shared by many Albertans. Those involved in the profession of social work and community social activists tended to support an institutional or social development perspective. While this did not fit with the Klein government's residual perspective I have argued, using concepts from the literature on radical organizational change, that it is difficult to envision the redesign successfully moving ahead without compromise on both sides: One cannot move ahead without the other. This was graphically demonstrated by the redesign's attempt to bypass the social work profession through the use of community, only to find that "community," insofar as it was represented by Steering Committees, essentially rejected the residual approach in favour of an institutional approach. My argument is therefore one of the need of adequate and informed public debate, fully inclusive of political leadership, to achieve the substantive change desired in improving outcomes for children and families.

Associated with the above analysis is my contention that the Klein government also failed adequately to think through the implication of the proposed collaborative community governance model proposed by the Office of the Commissioner of Children's Services. As noted earlier, the government did not address the fit of this model with the broader structural context of government or their top-down managerialist approach to achieving their fiscal agenda. While rhetorically supporting the CFSAs as vehicles for managing services, the government did little to affect the managerial independence to allow them to make managerial choices or think through the possibility of how to manage differences of opinion with their proposed partner.

Within the context and arguments set out above, I am asserting that the failure of the redesign was therefore a failure of government. Far from resulting in the improved efficiency, cost-effectiveness and quality promised by NPM framing of the redesign, the process required a significant outlay of public funds for minimal, if any, demonstrable improvement in outcomes for children and families.

In this section I have assessed the redesign as a management tool for more effective and responsive social services to children and families. I have assessed this as a failure and interpreted this failure using concepts from the literature on radical organizational change. This literature provides a valuable conceptual framework, built around a consideration of context and agency, that is both useful in assessing the change process and potentially better managing such processes. I now want to turn my attention to considering the redesign as a governance tool for more effective and responsive social services to children and families.

8.6 Conclusion

I have interpreted the redesign using concepts from the literatures on radical organizational change and the public sector to understand better the dynamics and critical dimensions of the redesign process. My interpretation confirms the critical influence of the institutional context in shaping the change process and constraining or facilitating the actions of the coalitions involved. I have also attempted to open up the possibilities of organizational agents better managing the change process in the face of such constraints. I have argued that while this was not the case in the redesign of child and family services, greater attention to understanding the institutional context, supported by better organizational capacity, commitment, and an understanding of power may have resulted in a different outcome.

I will now turn to my conclusions, but first want to briefly consider the redesign of child and family services in the broader context of government using community governance in other sectors, specifically education and health.

CHAPTER 9

RESULTS ORIENTED, COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE: COMPARATORS, CONCLUSIONS, SCHOLARLY AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

9.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I draw out the conclusions that might be reached from the attempt to radically change child and family services using a model of collaborative community partnership to improve both the governance and management of service. I want to situate these conclusions within the broader experience of government in utilizing collaborative alternative service delivery models in other sectors. Specifically, I want to compare the experience of child and family services with that of education and health care. Having drawn a number of conclusions, I review and critically assess the study's strengths and limitations, issues raised for future research and what I consider to be my key contributions to the two literatures associated with this study.

9.2 School Boards and Regional Health Care Authorities as Examples of Collaborative Partnerships

The use of community governance has been widely adopted in health care and is well established in education, through the practice of electing school boards. In this section I want to comment briefly on the changing context of governance in both education and health. Experimentation in the latter is more recent, and as such is more comparable to the circumstances around the redesign of child and family services. However, a brief review of both sectors will shed light on the role of community governance structures in the institutional context of the Westminster model of government. Briefly considering the precipitating factors and the practical unfolding of community governance in these sectors provides a broader context from which to consider how and to what degree the specific findings of this study might be generalized to other government settings experimenting with collaborative community partnerships in government.

9.2.1 Constraining the Independence of School Boards

In Canada, local school boards date back 150 years as a form of governance. While they predate provincial governments, provincial governments now have ultimate authority to decide what school boards do, how they get their money, and how much local autonomy they have. In general terms, the past twelve years have witnessed provincial governments taking greater control over financing, curriculum and academic outcomes, while encouraging parent and community members to become more involved in school-level decision-making through school councils. In most jurisdictions, school boards have lost the flexibility to respond to local community needs (Canadian School Boards Association, web site August 2002).

In line with many other provinces, schools in Alberta went through a significant change with the election of the Klein government (Webber 1995). The provincial Conservative government pursued an education business plan that included the shifting of power from school boards both upwards to the provincial department of education and downwards to individual schools and their parent communities. According to Webber (1995) this led to a reduced role for school boards in educational finance, the selection of their own school superintendents, and school accountability measures. As part of the restructuring, the number of school boards was reduced from 141 to about 60 (Alberta, Education Business Plan 1994). The restructuring has many parallels with the redesign of child and family services. The Alberta government set out to ensure school boards were aligned with their fiscal agenda and attempted to bypass the teachers resistance by encouraging increased community involvement in school management.

The Alberta Teachers' Association reacted in much the same way as the social workers' association, expressing skepticism that the real thrust behind the change was more about budgets than about children, but also recognizing that the system could benefit from change (Webber 1995). As with the redesign of children's services, the process for change was divisive and public argument was made that the changes were motivated more by the Klein government's ideological beliefs than by real fiscal necessity (Barlow and Robertson 1994). Hallinger, Murphy, and Hausman (1993) made a similar claim about the overall educational restructuring phenomenon in Canada, New Zealand, the United States, and Great Britain. Aronowitz and Giroux (1993, 226) agreed that the restructuring movement results from "narrow economic concerns, private interests, and strongly conservative values." The Association argued that already low teacher morale would plummet further; they argued that policy makers should understand that demoralized teachers were unlikely to embrace mandated changes. Furthermore, government change agents were advised to recognize the importance of working collaboratively with a strong teachers' association with approximately 26,000 members. Hallinger, Murphy, and Haousman (1993) also argued that the educational reformers had paid attention to organizational and governance issues at the expense of curricular and instructional matters.

This critique parallels my analysis of the restructuring of children's services: an expressed desire to see change by teachers, but skepticism about motives; the exclusion of professionals by labelling them as resistant to change and pursuing self-interest; and a focus on structural organizational and governance issues, at the expense of addressing the identified practice and resource issues. In the restructuring of school boards, similarly to the redesign of child and family services, the central power of the provincial government to pursue its fiscal agenda is paramount. School boards are to be aligned with government policy. One has only to witness the attempted rebellion of three school boards against the Ontario government in the late summer of 2002 to see this last principle in action. All three boards were dismissed for not complying with the government's no-deficit directive (Toronto, Globe and Mail August 29 2002, A13). As with child and family services, the dominant institutional context of government authority matters, constraining local aspirations and the horizontal responsiveness of even elected school boards.

9.2.2 Regional Health Authorities as Examples of Collaborative Partnerships

The fiscal problems that precipitated regionalization and the use of appointed community boards in health care also bear a striking resemblance to those that faced child and family services. Demographic and technological change resulted in significant cost increases throughout the 1980s, with the subsequent criticism of the way in which financing, payment, and regulation systems for health care are designed (OECD 1992). Between 1980 and 1990 Canada's spending on health care doubled without any noticeable improvements (Decter 2000). A review of the numerous health reform task force and royal commission reports that flowed from the provinces in the late 1980s and early 1990s reveal a large number of perceived needs in common with child and family services: cost containment, improved health outcomes, increased flexibility and responsiveness in delivery of care, and better integration and coordination of services. There was a flurry of activity that has continued throughout the 1990s and up to the present time calling on the need to change how health care is planned, organized and paid for (Rachlis and Kushner 1994, Bennett 2000). The result was a mantra for change comparable to that used in child and family services: cost containment, but improved services through improved management (focused on integrating systems, improved accountability, and community partnerships) and local community governance.

In nine of the ten provinces of Canada, regional health authorities are operating in one form or another. Establishing these authorities represented attempts by central governments to come to grips with difficult governance decisions in the context of fiscal constraint. As described by Lomas (1996), the policy of devolved command and control has created more than 100 new regional or local bodies in Canada, with powers and scope of authority that vary from limited power over hospitals (New Brunswick), to extensive resource allocation and other powers over a combined budget for community services, welfare, housing, corrections and almost all health care (Prince Edward Island)

As in the case of child and family services, issues of accountability and limits on the variation in outcome of decision making remain practical concerns. Lomas (1996), questions any central government's tolerance of local boards diverging from the central objectives of cost containment, as well as their willingness to allow significant variations in service delivery patterns to emerge across their province in the name of local preferences. However, this points to a potential conflict. For local authorities a key issue is what will be the biggest influence on its management choices: the agenda of central government (particularly cost management) or the needs and wants of its community. If the former, the board becomes little more than a central enforcer located in the community, described by Lomas (Ibid.) as de-concentration or the spatial redistribution of administrative authority to local offices in the community. If the needs and wants of the community predominate, then the board acts as a local mirror, which may not be congruent with central provincial government objectives.

Lomas (1996) looked at the attitudes of current board members to give a clue into which direction the boards were heading. In 1995, he surveyed board members in five provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. He received responses from 57 of 100 boards, with a 32% response rate from the participating boards. In the survey 72% of respondents identified local citizens as the group to which they felt most accountable, rather than the minister of health, the ministry of health, the provincial taxpayers, or the local group they represent. Members of the more mature boards, in Saskatchewan and Alberta, were more likely to feel restricted by rules laid down by their provincial government than members of the newer boards, in British Columbia and Nova Scotia. These results are suggestive of boards trying to play more of a local mirror role than being central enforcers.

This is comparable to the feelings expressed by the Steering Committees in their Service Plans and the CFSAs in their early Business Plans. Boards felt an obligation to 'horizontal' (citizen focused) as well as 'vertical' (government focused) accountability. Interestingly, the more mature boards are much more conscious of the restraints imposed by provincial government, underscoring the incremental constraining influence of the institutional context of government that I found evident in the redesign of child and family services.

With respect to outcomes, the major conclusion of a 1995 conference on regionalization and decentralization in heal[illegible] care was that despite worldwide experimentation with regional models, and with years of accumulated experience in some jurisdictions, major conclusions were still not possible (Dorland and Davis 1996). In 1995, the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) also argued that, as was the case of child and family services, there was little or no prior research or evaluation to reassure that devolving authority was likely to achieve the provincial governments' objectives of cost containment, improved health outcomes, more responsiveness and flexibility, and better integration and coordination. Indeed, they argue there is some evidence to suggest that equity, in the sense of comparable services being available to comparable populations, might be a concern as local bodies pursue quite different interpretations of their mandate (CMA 1995).

Fraser (1996) argues that for the present regionalization in the health care sector has been and likely will continue to be command and control, rather than collaboration, cooperation and consultation. Fraser argues that command and control starts in legislation and works its way down through the health care system often by regulation and through the use of adversarial processes. This is also comparable to the redesign of child and family services, and as with child and family services, the ability of this strategy to affect improved outcomes in the health care system is also contested.

Fraser (1996) cites Monique Begin, the political architect behind the Canada Health Act, arguing that governments need allies to make substantial change. She is reported as clearly recognizing that politicians need public support to succeed with major reform. In the case of health care, this requires recognizing doctors and nurses as key to reform. This is supported by the literature on public sector reform when it argues that to be successful governments must recognize that they are in a web of relationships and need to build coalitions (Wilson 1989, Savoie 1995). It is also supported by the literature of radical organizational change, when it argues the need of transformational leadership and coalition building to realize significant organizational change (Tushman and Romanelli 1985, Pettigrew 1985, Child 1997). As with the case of child and family services, where I argued the government needed to engage meaningfully and to work with the social work discourse to affect successful change, so appears to be the case in health care. The argument is being made that government and its community boards must meaningfully engage doctors, nurses and other health care professionals if they are to facilitate change successfully. These stakeholder groups, as with social workers and teachers, have an affiliation to a professional institutional context distinct from the institutional context of government.

9.2.3 Comparing Child and Family Services with Health and Education

This brief overview points to significant similarities between using community governance strategies in education and health care, with the redesign of child and family services studied in this dissertation. Through an emphasis on vertical accountability, collaborative community governance is being aligned and made subservient to the political will of government, and therefore its agenda and underlying discourse. Strategically, there is evidence of governments attempting to diminish the influence of organizational stakeholders in these systems, such as teachers, doctors and nurses, by appealing to an increased role for the community. However, community involvement is managed and contained, as exemplified by the use of school advisory councils and health councils. Community is to participate within the policy and operational framework established by the government in power. This is a very limited and circumscribed response to citizen involvement in governance and a very narrow understanding of collaborative governance in the case of the various board structures.

This somewhat superficial comparison using secondary data situates the redesign within a broader context and opens up the possibility of how my analytical framework and core arguments might be generalized in future research. I will turn to this later, but I now want to turn to the conclusions that might be reached from my study. I will then review and critically assess the study's strengths and limitations, issues raised for future research and what I consider to be my key contributions to the two literatures associated with this study.

9.3 Implications for the Governance and Management Challenges Facing Public Sector Reform.

In this section, I want to draw out some of the key policy and practice implications evolving from this study.

Collaborative Community Governance

This study contrasts the rhetoric surrounding collaborative community governance with its practice. As defined, collaboration is an ambivalent term, meaning both working together on a joint production or cooperating traitorously with an enemy. In many ways this ambivalence is found evident in this study. There was always ambivalence about the role of the governance model stood in what was a divisive change program. For those involved in the steering committees and subsequent CFSA boards, the process was to be a joint endeavour to improve services for children and families. For others, looking from the outside in as critics or from the inside out as workers feeling disempowered and in fear of losing their jobs, the community governance structure was understood as a government façade to hide a more sinister ideological agenda of smaller government and a betrayal of society's responsibility for some of the most vulnerable members of society. As with much rhetoric, the retrospective reality looks grayer and more complex.

The early framing of the redesign process was premised on community governance as a collaborative partnership between government and community. I have shown through this study that meaningful collaboration, in terms of a joint endeavour, was not clearly achieved. Rather the community governance structure used in attempting to redesign the child and family services sector, became firmly embedded in a traditional top-down, command and control framework of a Westminster model of government. The Commissioner of Children's Services rhetorically framed the redesign to fit with the underlying discourse of the Klein government and the operational policy framework that evolved around the governance structure turned the rhetoric into practice. This discourse understood collaborative community governance to be a means to reduce the size and significance of government, by returning the responsibility for helping individuals and families to the community, and as an instrument to manage costs where the public service had failed. It also understood the governance structure to be an instrument of government policy, appointed at the pleasure of government and subject to termination by government.

From a managerialist perspective (Pollit 1998), this form of community governance logically had to deliver a value for money higher than its cost to government (by way of dollars, but also non-tangible costs in terms of risk to the government) when compared to a traditional top-down public sector model or full privatization. The outcome should have been better fiscal, client and political outcomes than the least cost alternative. While it was still early in the implementation process when this study was being conducted, I could see no evidence that the model had or was about to achieve such outcomes.

My personal experience of the CFSA board governance process suggests that it has been a very limited and circumscribed success. Governance decisions previously made behind closed doors, with no public input or accountability, were now being made through public board meetings or at the very least through a management accountable to and questioned by appointed community members. The boards facilitated community consultation on a range of issues where before none would have happened and in some cases established even more local community advisory committees for programs or issues. In essence, the boards opened up a relatively closed system to community involvement, dialogue and criticism. I say limited success because many of these initiatives were in their early stages as this study was conducted. They needed institutionalizing and a more formal evaluation of their impact on governance decisions and outcomes for children and families.

At the beginning of this study, I described how in the past decade the idea of 'community governance' has been used to signal something different than large, central, representative governments. It has been promoted as a remedy to redress the perceived failure of central governments to solve key economic and social problems, by returning responsibility back to local community structures. It was seen as a means to balance the power of central government mechanisms, through experimentation with greater public participation in the decision making processes of government, and the devolution of policy and program decision-making to more local forms of governance structures. For the institutional discourse associated with the social work sector, community governance was not a move away from state responsibility for the human services, but rather afforded the potential of involving more citizens in governance issues to hold government accountable for providing adequate resources. A key conclusion from this study is to challenge politicians, civil servants and citizens to be explicit about what they understand community collaborative governance to be and how desirable it might be as a form of governance within a Westminster model of government or from the perspective of a particular discourse.

In democratic politics, governments frequently introduce new instruments, mechanisms, methods, and models of public management that spur new directions. Governments run ahead of theory. This can lead to innovation, but also to unforeseen consequences. It is to state the obvious in saying that governance is fundamental to government. Changes in governance processes in government can significantly affect the process, substance, values and machinery of government; they can affect how governments work, how they work together, and how they relate to citizens. Such changes warrant careful consideration and adequate public debate. Devolution (the transfer to a local authority of significant decision making) is inevitably a bargaining process, not simply a juridical act. Devolution requires adequate thought and debate about scope (the what), function (the how—planning, resource allocation, policy development, standard setting, coordination, evaluation and delivery), and authority. In the case of the redesign, neither adequate thought nor debate was apparent. Did the Klein government really want to develop a collaborative governance partnership with the community? The systemic result would say not. A more informed and open discussion was needed of the mechanisms, strategies and consequences of changes in governance practices.

A key challenge for governments is that of exploring more inclusive ways of involving citizenry in problem-identification and analysis, reflective policy development and implementation. This requires moving outside the legislature to develop additional structures and systems that allow a reflective process of debate to wrestle with inevitably complex issues and conflicting potential solutions. This would require thinking through and then shaping a workable system that includes politicians, public servants and community, working through the trade-offs required in the interest of potentially better economic and social policy development. The study underscores the existing public sector reform criticism of Osborne and Gaebler's distinction between "rowing" and "steering" as naïve. As shown through the redesign, citizens expect their government to be involved in the rowing when needed and, conversely, an educated citizenry is not content to be excluded from steering. The idea that governments can steer and community will do the rowing, does not address the fundamental issue identified earlier of a demand for meaningful public participation in the process of government. This presents a fundamental challenge to a Westminster model of government premised on representation based on a simple electoral majority in support of a party's platform. Collaborative governance challenges us to facilitate a more inclusive process. It challenges us to think about whose values and what information will be used to inform choices and resource allocations: provincial politicians / civil servants, major stakeholder interests, service providers, service recipients or community appointees and / or representatives? In this respect the modelling suggested by Pross (1986), Sabatier (1987), Atkinson and Coleman (1989), and Lindquist (1992) offer a promising and important framework for consideration in developing effective policy processes.

Accountability

A key governance challenge is that of accountability. Accountability in the redesign was essentially framed as a vertical accountability of the CFSA boards to government, premised on government's horizontal accountability to the community. This was a shift from the early framing and, I believe, understanding of the Steering Committees who saw themselves vertically accountable to government, but also horizontally accountable to their communities. They also saw government accountable to them in terms of providing adequate resources to achieve their mission. In practice, this study shows that issues of accountability were not adequately explored and addressed in advance of embarking on the redesign. The result was the application of a traditional vertical accountability framework in response to criticism from the opposition. There is a need to recognize the prior work required to develop an accountability framework that accommodates a collaborative community partnership within a Westminster model of government. The challenges of vertical, horizontal and mutual accountabilities need to be practically addressed in advance of introducing collaborative governance models.

Shifts in Managerial Practice

Community governance requires a cultural and structural shift in traditional public sector practices. Current practices of the civil service are vertically focused on supporting and protecting the minister. Collaborative governance requires relationships built on power sharing, interdependence, shared management and planning. Building trust, a shared understanding, common interests and common objectives are critical. These issues were not adequately addressed in the redesign process, leaving the department confused about its role and responsibilities as the CFSAs were launched. Structurally and systemically, thinking through the roles and responsibilities of the public sector, within the context of a collaborative governance structure, is a requirement if such arrangements are to be adequately supported.

Finding Accommodation with the Dominant Institutional Sector

The lack of attention, engagement and negotiation with the broader institutional context of government to accommodate a collaborative community governance model better, allowed the inertial qualities of that context to constrain, if not undermine, the governance initiative. Success required a supportive government institutional environment. This was only minimally achieved.

The Office of the Commissioner should have engaged the broader context of government, in particular the office of the premier and the Ministry of the Treasury, but also the government caucus and the opposition in support of its model. The policy framework for collaborative community governance should have been developed up front, have been promoted and strongly supported by government, and then have provided a context and parameters for the subsequent planning and implementation of the redesign.

Recognizing and Accommodating Other Institutional Contexts

The dissertation also points to another institutional context as critical – social work. I have argued that the institutional context of social work, while clearly assessed as relatively weak compared to the power of government, was nevertheless critical to the success of the redesign. This points to the need for inclusive, collaborative processes that not only include government and community, but also extend to recognize major stakeholder interests and values as critical to successful change. This same principle could be extended to the union. In effect, those who can effectively resist change need to be embraced up front or those leading the change need to be certain that they have adequate power to achieve the long-term change in spite of the opposition. The use of 'power' needs to be carefully considered, for whereas the government clearly has legislative power to move its agenda forward, this study and supporting research literature also emphasize the need for consensus-building across different coalitions as a required base for sustainable long term change.

Organizational Leadership Capacity Is Critical To Successful Change

Transformational and instrumental leadership, as well as adequate role power, are needed to realize large-scale organizational change. The dissertation raises serious questions about the organizational capacity of the Ministry to effect the envisaged radical organizational change.

The power to enable change was embedded within the political leadership of the government. This points to the need of political leadership in terms of long term, high-level commitment and relative stability that is supportive of a radical change. As seen from the child and family services redesign process there can be a wide gap between the decision to embark on a new model and its implementation. The redesign took several years and saw five ministers at its helm from 1993-2000. The steadfastness associated with seeing through a substantial change over multiple years is ill suited to a political system focused on four year mandates, a context where ministers inevitably compete with each other and their predecessors to make a name for themselves through a media hungry for novel ideas and solutions. This suggests that within the context of government, significant change must be managed within shorter timeframes of perhaps as little as two years, or that governments have the discipline to hold themselves to multi-year strategies in spite of changes in Ministry leadership.

Transformational and instrumental leadership was also weak across the civil service leadership. Those leading the change process did not appear to be adequately aware of the need to deal with the series of difficult trade-offs (Langford 1997) that would have been institutionally required to facilitate community governance successfully in the broader context of government. The data points to the conclusion that those leading the change process inadequately analyzed its environment, inadequately analyzed the known strengths and weaknesses of its proposed alternative service delivery model, and subsequently inadequately managed the change process. The undermanagement of radical organizational change is not unusual or limited to public sector reform (Hinings and Greenwood 1988). This is something that could be improved by government through the training and education of the senior management.

Overestimating Community Capacity

The study also raises questions about community capacity and power. Is it reasonable to expect that community members have the capacity to engage in the kind of strategic planning and performance management that collaborative partnerships require? Training and support is also required. Sharing of power requires a conscious decision of government to do so. Insofar as this is not done, it is naïve to believe that community governance can affect radical change. Insofar as it is done, a government runs the risk of community opposing its direction. The old conflicts between provincial governments and providers with relatively transparent self interest, may be replaced by a more challenging conflict in which provincial governments are confronted by devolved authorities, cloaked in the protection of "mirroring" local needs and wants, and armed in some instances with the imprimatur of elected status. The more effective and vigorous the devolved authority becomes in achieving the goal of better reflecting local needs, then the more likely they are to come in to conflict with some provincial government vision of needs (Lomas 1996).

Adequacy of Resources

Community governance is not a substitution for adequate human, financial and other resources required to manage and complete the change process. This was rhetorically papered over in the redesign, but practically constrained the process. The redesign underscored Pollit's (1998) point that NPM strategies associated with improvements in efficiency, cost-effectiveness and quality are frequently made at a rhetorical level, without addressing the practical struggle with rising demands and diminishing real resources. These appear to have been fundamental issues for child and family services at the beginning of the redesign and they remained fundamental issues at the end of the redesign.

Rhetorical Limitations

Rhetoric is not a substitution for competent change management practices. I have shown the redesign process as obfuscated by senior public servants making it all things to all stakeholders. I argued that this was not some form of deviant behaviour, but is functionally related to the attempt to reconcile different demands and pressures both from the government, and externally and internally from different stakeholders (Wilson 1989). However, it is not functional to successful organizational change. From my perspective, such obfuscation, effectively the papering over of contradictions inherent to the redesign, simply delayed the inevitable failure and enhanced the frustration and cynicism of many individuals who contributed their time and effort to the process. The extent to which such obfuscation was applied to critical strategic decision making, points to a major weakness in the strategic capability of government to affect successful change. I would argue that the use of rhetoric is not a substitute for critical analysis or a replacement for the responsibility of politicians to lead the political process of consensus-building across different constituents and differing ideas to affect successful change (Savioe 1995).

The Importance of Policy Development

NPM strategies are not a substitution for substantive policy development. While NPM provides a valuable set of management tools to government in its search for more efficient and possibly effective ways to govern, it does not provide content. Content comes from policy. I argue that any significant redesign of child welfare must rest on a clear understanding of its purpose. As noted by Galaway and Hudson (1995, 368), " a high priority is to reach agreement about the intended outcomes of child welfare services and measures of these outcomes. The fundamental question of what purposes we are trying to achieve with child welfare programs must be answered, along with related questions about the measures to be used in assessing results." This broader social policy discussion was fundamentally absent from the redesign process.

The social policy objectives of the redesign were presented as givens by the Commissioner, but remained contested throughout the redesign. The institutional orientation of the service plans, developed through community consultation, was similar to that evident in the original Children's Advocate's report, *In Need of Protection* (Alberta, Child Welfare Review 1993), and distinct from the residual approach adopted by the Klein government. Engagement was required, but not facilitated through the redesign. A lack of consensus on purpose inevitably acted as a barrier to achieving substantive change to improve services and outcomes for children and families.

Having argued the case for adequate policy development, this study also points to the inadequate implementation and use of management and business practices. The study points to the value and possibility of more rigorous use of private sector and business practices in achieving greater efficiency and effectiveness.

I will now turn to the contribution that this study makes to the two literatures of public sector reform and radical organizational change.

9.4 Contributions Of Child And Family Services Changes To Theories Of Public Sector Reform And Community Governance

First, this study makes important practical contributions for government ministries attempting to implement radical organizational change through the use of collaborative community governance structures. Radical public sector reform has a profound and direct impact on the lives of citizens and the employees involved in public sector service. It warrants public attention and debate. This study contributes to that scrutiny and debate.

Langford (1997) notes the frequent failure of this kind of community governance as part of an ASD, precisely because the broader system does not support it. The use of community governance structure is described as an ongoing experiment without any clear idea of how it will all fit together. I think this is where this study makes a significant contribution to the public sector reform literature. The dissertation supports the need and value of engagement with the radical organizational change literature to inform analysis, but also the management of large-scale public sector reform.

Using concepts from the literature on radical organizational change, I have shaped an analytical framework that systematically explores where and where not the fit between community governance and the institutional context of government occurs. The literature on organizational change has actively explored the interaction between agency and context (Pettigrew 1987, Greenwood and Hinings 1996, Child 1997, Barley and Tolbert 1997). I have used concepts from the radical organizational change literature to explore the specifics of the interaction between a community governance structure and the institutional context of government. I have used a processual analysis (Pettigrew 1985) to set out in detail how the proposed community governance structure was constrained through the redesign process, as different coalitions found their ideas and values facilitated or constrained by the institutional context of government and social work.

This analysis further opened up for consideration more than just the institutional context of the Westminster model of government as a determinant of the outcome of the attempted change. My study identified the professional institutional context as also influencing the change process and needing to be taken into account. The existence of an independent professional institutional context also applies to other key areas of public sector reform, namely health and education. This is an expansion of the analysis undertaken to date by the public sector reform literature.

Rather than stopping at the potentially difficult "fit" between community governance and the institutional context of government, this study explores the possibility of a change agent utilizing a range of conceptual and practical tools for superior management of radical organizational change. My critique of the role of the Office of the Commissioner as the architect of the redesign process and a critical change agent opens up the critical role that senior levels of public service play in shaping and then enacting public sector reform. My study challenges the public sector reform literature to analyze the capacity of this cadre of staff to manage the large-scale changes that form part of many governments' agendas effectively. It adds to the existing work assessing the required core competencies of these staff. Underlying this analysis, the study raises questions about the degree or competence present in the public sector to use private sector practices and supports the literature that has questioned the fit of such practices within the institutional context of government.

In broader terms, the study also sheds further light on the evolving shape of our societal governance structures, of the complex process of power sharing and participatory policy development. Social policy, along with economic policy, plays a fundamental role in shaping all of our lives in a very direct way. This is all the more the case when social policy is articulated as public policy in terms of legislated Acts, regulations and by-laws that are then legitimate, universal and that exert considerable control on citizens through their enforcement. The policy review process is about making decisions that are, in the perception of those making them, in the best interests of citizens. This is both a complex and difficult task. "Best interests" are highly influenced by our subjective perceptions framed by our limited knowledge, particular experiences and resulting beliefs. Inevitably there will be a wide range of different opinions and perspectives. Exploring ways to enhance the inclusiveness of this process is precisely the pressure identified by DiIulio et al 1993, Aucoin 1995, Peters 1995 and Caiden 1998. This dissertation points to the willingness and desire of individuals across communities wanting to be actively involved in this process, but it also points to the need to work through the issue of this involvement independent from specific policy content issues. An operational framework needs to be developed that adequately addresses power and process, in essence a reshaping of governance in advance of particular policy development or application.

9.5 Contributions Of Child And Family Services Changes To Organizational Theories Of Change

A specific goal of this study was to use concepts from the literature on radical organizational change to better understand, explain and manage public sector reform. The study confirms the value of this undertaking.

In specific reference to the literature on radical organizational change, the dissertation adds to the agency-structure research and the exploration of the interaction between the two. The conclusions of this dissertation support the research stream that points to the powerful role of the institutional context and therefore the important role of interests, power and capability in trying to facilitate and manage change in the face of such contexts.

The study also adds to the growing literature that is applying concepts of radical organizational change to better understanding public sector reform. In particular, the dissertation has opened up the issue of the interaction between two different institutional contexts on the outcome of a radical organizational change process—government and professional. The interaction of the opposing ideas and values of the two institutional contexts and underlying discourses is interesting from a radical organizational change perspective. From the perspective of the radical organizational change literature, the dominance of the government institutional context is apparent. In comparison with institutional context of government, other institutional contexts do not possess the same level of structural or binding mechanisms to shape the redesign. However, the study shows that while the redesign was inevitably shaped and constrained by the dominant institutional context of government and its associated discourse, it was also significantly impacted by the professional institutional context. This leads to a first conclusion with respect to the impact of the institutional context of government on a collaborative community governance structure. The structural embeddedness of the community governance structure in the institutional context of government did not guarantee that the ideas and values of that context were mapped onto the organization. In practice, the government loses some of the top-down control it is able to exert through its civil service.

This interpretation led to a second critical conclusion provided by a systemic analysis of the redesign from a radical organizational change perspective. The competition between the two institutional contexts resulted in a change stalemate. This is described in the literature on radical organizational change as a competitive commitment resulting in an unresolved excursion (Hinings and Greewood 1988). This study adds to the research stream on institutional contexts, pointing to the dynamic that can occur between two contexts in influencing a change process and the differential mechanisms in exerting that influence.

This is of importance, as attempts at public sector reform involving community governance structures have predominated in those sectors where professional affiliation is an important factor—education, health and social services. My dissertation points to the importance of organizational change agents needing to engage effectively both the government and professional contexts to effect successful organizational change.

9.6 Future Critical Research On Public Sector Reform and Community Governance.

Through my dissertation I have opened up the analysis of public sector reform to a more dynamic and process oriented analysis using concepts from the literature on radical organizational change. Identifying underlying, substantive and, in this case, contentious discourses, along with the linkage of these discourses to institutional contexts and their supportive coalitions, has shown itself to be a valuable analytical tool to increase understanding, facilitate critique and potentially to improve the management of radical change in the public sector. However, I also noted weaknesses in my approach in terms of access to further information. A key improvement to future research would be the active support of a government in facilitating increased access to the actual decision makers and the decision-making processes associated with radical change processes within government. Having increased access to the different levels identified in this study—cabinet, caucus, senior public servants, staff and citizens—would add to the depth of this and future study. Transparency in government is rhetorically topical, but difficult to achieve when moving on controversial agendas where significant opposition is inevitable. Nevertheless, fuller access of researchers to this process would improve the research methodology and promise potential benefits not only to our understanding of radical organizational change, but also the capacity of different levels of government to enable and manage significant change processes better.

Specifically, such an approach might better be able to explore the role of the individual in relation to the group in relation to the context (organizational and institutional) in realizing radical organizational change. This was a goal of this research project, but was only partially realized.

Also in the same vein of individual motivation and influence, this study raises the question (but does not fully answer it) of the issue of how open or understanding government was of a truly collaborative community governance structure. A critical question for future research is to assess more accurately the interest, understanding and willingness of politicians to explore and operationalize new forms of governance that are inclusive of greater and more meaningful collaborative community governance.

This study focused on a single case study. Yin (1989) argues the benefits of multi-case studies. This is clearly an approach that would refine and expand on the methodology and findings of my dissertation. Specifically related to child and family services would be a comparative study of British Columbia's current regionalization and introduction of community governance structures compared and contrasted with Alberta's redesign process using the analytical framework set out in this dissertation. Moving to a broader context would be a comparative study of British Columbia's government's radical change initiative with that of Alberta, Ontario and Saskatchewan. Health Care reform is another example.

The latter area, along with education, is an area worthy of future research to understand better and to assess the differential impact of professional institutional contexts on facilitating or inhibiting radical change involving community governance in the context of the Westminster model of government. A more in-depth comparison is warranted of the comparisons and differences between these three sectors. I have proposed that the effective redesign of child and family services needed effective collaboration between the two institutional sectors – professional and government. This question is of critical importance in assessing the possibility of change in the health care sector, populated as it is by powerful professional associations in the form of physicians and nurses.

Beyond methodology and the value of multi-case studies across sectors and contexts, a fundamental question remains as to whether collaborative community governance leads to better governance and, more importantly, better outcomes for citizens when compared to government alone.

Clearly this dissertation found that in and of itself community governance does not lead to improved outcomes. This leads into and opens up the broader issue of decision-making and policy development processes in government (be it at cabinet, treasury board, standing policy committees or across the senior management structure) or through community governance structures. The scope, complexity and time pressures associated with decision-making, as well as the evidence of ideologically-driven rhetoric as a basis for action raise issues about the quality of strategic decision making in government and the capacity of community. Specifically, what practical analytical frameworks might be used to enhance decision making in a political context with all of its ambiguity and compromise? What role might community collaborative governance play in this process?

Finally, this dissertation has focused on radical organizational change within a given institutional context or contexts. It has not addressed the possibility of fundamentally shifting or replacing the dominant ideology or ideologies. Much of the current context is framed by the neo-liberal doctrines that took hold in the 1980s and 1990s, replacing the then dominant Keynesian discourse. Future research might profitably explore the conditions and action required to successfully pursue radical organizational change involving shifts to alternative ideologies, in effect changing the contextual framework and its discourse.

In concluding, Langford (1997) noted that much experimentation is taking place without much in the way of understanding how it will all fit together. Is this a passing fad or the harbinger of a more fundamental change to the governance processes in our society? If desirable, how can government become more effective in achieving such change? This study has made a contribution to these issues, more cross-sector analysis and research is required, linked to improved public debate and discussion.

9.7 Conclusion

In late 1997, I commenced my role as CEO of the capital region. Early in my employment I made many presentations to many staff groups and stakeholders on the upcoming changes. During this process I was given two cartoons. The first showed three cowboys attempting to hang some body from a tree. The potential victim found himself and his horse completely tangled up in the rope, with the three cowboys looking on in exasperation as they had failed in their task. The heading for the cartoon said, "Ok, ok… every body calm down and let's try this one more time!" Through this dark humour, staff showed me their frustration at the repeated failed attempts to reform and improve their world. In another cartoon, two scientists look on at a white board with a detailed and complex Gant chart. Where the chart finished, somebody had handwritten, "Now the miracle occurs!"

Three years later, while providing the executive leadership to the provincial child welfare review, I clearly saw that no miracle had occurred. As I toured the province, with the MLA charged with the review, we were both deeply moved by the ongoing pain of children separated from their families and communities, by abandoned youth seeking adequate support to feed and shelter themselves, by parents seeking respect and compassion from a judgemental system, by staff overworked, stressed and inadequately supported.

My intent in choosing this topic for my dissertation was to understand better the dynamics that resulted in no significant improvement, in spite of the best efforts and commitment of literally thousands of individuals who tried to improve the system. I am hopeful that this study sheds light on that process and more importantly offers insights and possibilities as to how this might substantively be achieved in the future.

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APPENDIX 1: CASE STUDY DATA BASE

The Klein Government

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